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FROM THE GOSPEL TO THE CREEDS

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EDITORS

FROM THE GOSPEL TO THE CREEDS

FROM THE GOSPEL TO THE CREEDS

Studies in the Early History of the Christian Church

BY

WILLIAM L. SULLIVAN, D.D.

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PART I

HOW CHRISTIANITY EXPANDED

FROM THE GOSPEL TO THE CREEDS

CHAPTER I

THE FAITH THAT CREATED CHRISTIANITY

1. *The Darkest Hour in Christian History.*

WHEN Jesus was put to death the little company of his apostles and other disciples fled to their homes in fear and disappointment. Imagine the depth of their disappointment. They had believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Yet instead of entering into glory as a heaven-sent king, he had suffered a shameful death. They had been been expecting that God was just about to put an end to this wicked world, and establish, on a renewed earth, a splendid and just kingdom in which as followers of the Master they should stand next to his throne. Instead, they saw the enemies of Jesus and all the forces of evil victorious. God had not performed the miracles expected. He had not saved Jesus. He had not brought a dreadful day of judgment on the world

of sinners. He had not set up the rule of the glorious King-Messiah. In so great a failure of so great a faith, they were shocked and downcast; while, on the other hand, the Pharisees rejoiced that there was an end of the Nazarene and of all his works.

It is evident that unless some change had come over the scattered and terrified apostles, there would have been no Christianity. If by some means their sunken faith and lost enthusiasm had not been restored and raised, we should now barely know the name of Jesus. He would be given only a passing mention in history as one of many reformers that had arisen in the Jewish church. He might even be remembered as a pathetic victim of religious delusion.

2. *Faith Begins to Revive in Galilee.*

But the great change did come. A transformation took place which made eager and courageous preachers and martyrs out of the discouraged disciples who had run away from the awful scene of the crucifixion. Something happened which brought them back from Galilee where they were safe, to Jerusalem where they were in danger, and inspired them to preach the name of Jesus in the presence of the very men who had caused him to be killed.

To understand what it was that thus put a new

heart and mind into the followers of Jesus, we must try to enter, so far as we can, into their thoughts and feelings after the crucifixion. In the first shock of that disaster, they were, as we have said, completely overcome. Not only did their faith in Jesus as Messiah suffer a terrible blow, but they were in a state of terror lest they too should be arrested as accomplices of their leader. So they ran away to Galilee, the native province of all or nearly all of them. There, amid familiar surroundings, in scenes that recalled their companionship with Jesus, secure from persecution and composed in mind, they began to reflect on the greatest incident in their humble lives, their association with the mighty Prophet just crucified. They may have recalled his frequent word exhorting them to have faith, and ever greater faith, in the unfailing Father. "Ye of little faith" was one of his rare but crushing reproaches. Again he said, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matt. 17: 20)

But how could they keep their faith in him since he had died? Why not? It was a belief of the Jewish people that before the kingdom of the Messiah should come, one of the great prophets would rise from the dead and appear

again. Jesus himself in his lifetime had been thought to be Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the other prophets, or John the Baptist come to life. "Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." (Matt. 16: 13, 14. Compare Mark 6: 14–16) Why should not Jesus himself be the prophet to come to life in immediate preparation of the Messiah-Kingdom?

This was a thought to thrill their hearts, we may be sure. They recalled that, as Jesus went up from Galilee on the journey which ended in his death, he spoke as though the coming of the kingdom was at hand. "The kingdom of God is come nigh." (Luke 10: 11) "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you." (Luke 17: 21) When the crowds in the streets of Jerusalem on the day of his public entry into the city hailed Jesus as Messiah: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Jesus accepted that greeting, thus again showing his belief in the nearness of the kingdom. Finally, there were his wonderful words at the Last Supper: "I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26: 29)

All this meant that the marvelous and miraculous establishment of the kingdom was near at

hand. It meant that, despite the death of Jesus, the great promise would be fulfilled. It meant that he would return; that not Elijah or Jeremiah or John the Baptist would come from the dead, but that Jesus would come to open the gates of the blessed kingdom and be crowned Messiah-King. It meant that soon they should be reunited with their master, and with him should drink the new wine of the new age.

3. *This Faith the Result of the Personality of Jesus.*

We have just seen two of the reasons for the revival of the faith of the disciples, namely, their belief that the kingdom of Messiah was at hand and their conviction that the death of Jesus not only did not stand in the way of the coming of the kingdom, but might actually be a direct preparation for it. Why should he not rise from the dead and be the prophet to inaugurate it?

But there was a deeper reason still for their restored faith in Jesus as triumphant over death. This reason was Jesus himself. They had known him. They had heard his daily word. They had seen his spiritual power, his divine benignity, his peace, his wisdom, his constant union with God. They had observed him bringing to the sick such trust and radiant faith that many a diseased body trembled with new health at

his touch. They had looked upon him shining with such purity as cast the sinner at his feet in tears. They remembered how godlike Jesus was and how he had moved among them as a heavenly presence. Could this personality be dissolved in death? Could one like Jesus simply cease to be because wicked men had killed his body? Was there not in him something immortal that would make him victorious over death, as he had been victorious over hate and sickness and sin? Yes, they answered, Jesus lives. One like him can not die.

Let it be remembered then that the chief foundation of the faith in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was the holiness and power of Jesus while he lived. Later it was said that the risen Jesus appeared before his disciples in the physical form that he had before his death. The rumor was that his tomb had been found empty, and that angels announced his resurrection. There is even the story that the risen Lord ate food with his disciples.

These stories are chiefly, if not entirely, devout legends, that grew up in honest but uncultivated minds. Perhaps some of his disciples thought that they saw a vision of Jesus. Such strange experiences of heightened emotion have occurred again and again in religious history. But the fact to keep in mind is that *it was not*

the apparitions which created faith in Jesus, but faith in Jesus which created the apparitions.

It would be an extraordinary thing for a man dead and buried to leave the tomb, appear in the city where he died, and for forty days to associate with his former companions. Would not this arouse the entire city? Would it not be entered on all the records of the time? But no one except believers ever saw the risen Jesus.

Our conclusion then is this: The belief in a risen Jesus which created Christianity rests on two pillars: first, on the passionate hope that the kingdom of Messiah was near at hand; and secondly, on the sanctity and power of Jesus as influencing men and persuading them that one so godlike could not rest in the grave forever.

CHAPTER II

FIRST TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS

1. *The Faith Believed by the Apostles.*

THE apostles reëntered Jerusalem holding ardently to these four points of faith: 1. Jesus was the Messiah promised of old to the Jews. 2. He would come soon from heaven to put an end to this evil world, and to establish the blessed and happy kingdom of Messiah and to be its king. 3. People who wished to be admitted to Messiah's kingdom must repent, believe in the Messiahship of Jesus, and be baptized. 4. The shameful death of Jesus did not destroy his title of Messiah, because his resurrection from the dead gloriously conquered death and proved him the Promised One, the Elect of God.

This was the faith, or, if we may use the word, the creed of the apostles. Except for this faith they remained Jews, holding to Judaism as ardently as they had ever done. Jesus was a Jew and never left the Jewish church. On the contrary, he faithfully observed the law of his people. He even said once: "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I

came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished." (Matt. 5: 17, 18) The Jews were still the chosen people. To the Jews the Gospel must be preached. In the beginning nothing was further from the minds of the apostles than to go out into the Gentile world and preach the Gospel to non-Jews. Later on it required a miracle, we are told, to induce Peter to enter the house of a Gentile and baptize him a Christian. And the other Christians of Jewish origin who saw this "were amazed because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 10: 45)

A second reason why the apostles at first had no idea of preaching to Gentiles was that they expected the end of the world so soon. The great "day" might come at any moment. Why then go to the Gentiles with the Gospel when there was not even time to announce it to the chosen people of God, the Jews?

2. *The First Missionary Work.*

The apostles chose a dramatic hour for the first public announcement of their faith in Jesus. While Jerusalem was filled with Jews both inhabitants of the city and strangers, who thronged

the streets and temple in celebration of the feast of Pentecost (the harvest feast of Leviticus 23), Peter rose up before a great audience to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah of their race. We are told that three thousand were converted, but of these figures we can by no means be sure. At all events, the great mission of the Gospel was begun, and the history of the Christian church opened.

Once under way the missionary movement made swift progress. Not only were there public sermons, but it is certain that in quieter ways, perhaps going from house to house, the older disciples and some of the more zealous converts spread the glad tidings and joyously professed their faith. Some disorder naturally attended this propaganda; for many Jews would offensively resent the claims of Jesus, and the Christians would with no less heat maintain them. In these disturbances were premonitions of the storm of persecution that was soon to break, a persecution that was to give to the new religion its first martyr, Stephen.

3. *The First Christian Martyr.*

Stephen was one of seven men selected by the apostles to superintend the relief of the Christian poor. "Deacons" these seven were called; that is, in the literal meaning of the

word, "those who serve." Stephen was of an ardent temper, and we well may believe that he used severe language in denouncing the Jewish leaders who had caused the death of Jesus. It appears that he once declared that the temple would be destroyed as a punishment for the city's rejection of Jesus as Messiah. This led to his arrest on the charge of blasphemy. He was tried on this charge, found guilty, and sentenced to the Old Testament penalty for blaspheming, death by stoning. (Leviticus 24: 16; Deuteronomy 13: 6–10) He died with courage and with radiant faith that God would receive him as a true follower of Jesus. (Acts, chapters 6 and 7)

4. *Consequences of the Death of Stephen.*

A. *Christians Not Wanted in Judaism.* — The death of Stephen had important consequences. In the first place, it proved that the Jewish church would not tolerate in its membership those who believed in Jesus. As we have said, the apostles had at first no intention of founding a separate church. Jews they were; Jews they intended to remain, only, Jews who believed that Jesus had fulfilled the Messianic promises. But the martyrdom of Stephen showed that the Jewish church did not want them. Christians were now regarded as heretics, as renegades, to

be hunted down and severely punished whenever possible.

This meant, of course, that the followers of Jesus must now form a separate church. But the fact is that very few Christians saw this at the time. Nearly all of them, if indeed not all, held fast to Judaism and refused to think of entire separation from their ancestral church. In reality, however, that separation was made inevitable by the killing of Stephen, though it took the work and genius of Paul, years later, to complete it.

B. The Gospel Scattered to Many Lands. — A second consequence of the martyrdom was that many believers in Jesus left Jerusalem to escape the hostility now officially fostered against them. These fugitives, settling in other cities, such as Antioch, Samaria, Jaffa, Damascus, and even in places so distant as Phenicia and Cyprus, spread their faith among their new neighbors. "They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word" says the Book of Acts. (8: 4) Thus the persecution that aimed at the destruction of the infant church was in reality a means of spreading and strengthening it. The name of Jesus, hardly known in his lifetime outside Galilee, Samaria and Judea, was soon spoken in many of the chief Jewish centers of Asia Minor. The Gospel

was outgrowing both Judaism and Palestine. A world-wide mission was begun and the immediate cause of it was the persecution at Jerusalem.

C. *Gentiles Apply for Christian Fellowship.* — One further result we must notice as attending the dispersion of the faithful after Stephen's death. The Christians were now entering Gentile cities, and here they found pagans as well as Jews desirous of learning about Jesus. Many of these pagans soon believed in Jesus and asked admittance into Christian fellowship. We have already said that this formed a serious problem for early Christianity, since Gentiles were not in any circumstances admitted to religious equality with Jews. Peter's vision compelling him to receive a pagan convert we have already mentioned. But it seemed to do even Peter very little good; for some time later he refused to sit at table with Gentile Christians. (Galatians 2: 11–16) The extraordinary thing and the sorrowful thing is, that even after Christians were driven out of the Jewish church they could not see that the Gospel had a world-wide mission; they still held to the narrow exclusiveness of the Pharisees; they still were blind to the equality and brotherhood which Jesus had preached. How this grave problem was solved we shall see later in our study of the apostle Paul.

CHAPTER III

THE APOSTOLIC PREACHING AND PRACTICE

1. *The Preaching of the Apostles and the Preaching of Jesus.*

In the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles we have a comparatively full statement of the first sermons preached by Christian disciples. In substance, if not in words, the speeches of Peter in the second, third, and fourth chapters, the prayer of the disciples in the fourth, and the address of Stephen in the seventh, are accurately reported and form a precious picture of the primitive Christian faith and hope. We could hardly ask a more important question respecting the earliest history of Christianity than this: What do these utterances, dating from the infancy of our religion, contain? Let us try to answer this question with some fulness.

In the first place, we note a great difference between this preaching and the preaching of Jesus. Jesus preached the simple and splendid truths of the spirit. He told people to love God, their Father, and all mankind, their brethren. He urged them to earnestness, zeal, and courage

in following where the Holy Spirit led. He appealed to them to be clean of heart, to be righteous in deed and desire, to be faithful to duty even unto bearing the cross. In a word, his preaching was moral and spiritual. Even when he spoke of the coming kingdom, his main emphasis was upon the inward preparation which should be made for receiving it. Jesus hardly ever argued. He held up a noble picture of the holy life and trusted to its quiet influence upon the hearts and minds of his hearers.

In the preaching of the apostles, however, we notice that argument and doctrine hold the front and chief place. Their great endeavor was to prove something — that Jesus was Messiah. So they searched the Old Testament for texts and prophecies, and did their best to prove to the Jews that Jesus fulfilled the ancient promises. Appeals to repentance and a good life we may feel sure that they uttered; but the chief characteristic of their preaching was doctrinal or theological. We cannot reasonably find fault with this. For they knew that the Jews would never accept and follow Jesus until they had first been convinced that he was their expected Messiah. But at the same time we must see that this emphasis on argument, this insistence on a matter of opinion and belief, is a departure from the method and spirit of Jesus. In the course of

time this was to have the sad result of making people think more of belief than of good works, and of elevating theology above pure morality.

2. What the First Disciples Thought of Jesus.

Secondly, it is important to remark how these first Christian preachers spoke about Jesus. They did not call him God, nor even Son of God. They did not say that he existed eternally in heaven before his appearance in the flesh on earth. Nor did they hold that it is through the death of Jesus that salvation comes to men. And finally they made no mention that Jesus had a miraculous birth; nor that his earthly mission was to atone for the sin of Adam; nor that mankind was under the wrath of God until the Christ appeared. All these opinions are later and do not belong to the faith of the first disciples.

The first belief was that Jesus was "a man approved of God" (Acts 2: 22); "whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death" (2: 24); that "the God of our fathers hath glorified his Servant Jesus" (3: 13); and that Jesus was God's "holy Servant." (4: 27, 30)

Jesus, then, they believed was God's true and faithful servant, a man whom God elevated to the glory of the promised Messiah, and raised from the dead. The whole burden of their

preaching to the Jews was that Jesus should be accepted not as a God slain for sin, but as Messiah who fulfilled the ancient promises. And when the Jews objected: How could Messiah be killed by the shameful penalty of crucifixion? the apostles answered simply: "It was foretold in the Scriptures." They did not make the crucifixion the chief act in a tragedy of blood-atonement. They left it to the mysterious Providence which had long ago predicted it.

Thus the creeds of later times find very little support in the first sermons of the followers of Jesus, since in these sermons is not even a shadow of reference to a Trinity, an original sin, a salvation by blood, an infallible church, or a succession of bishops.

3. *Baptism, Communion, The Gift of Tongues.*

Let us now mention one or two points more in the faith and practice of these first Christians. They believed that Jesus would soon return to judge the world and to establish his glorious kingdom, surrounded by his saints and disciples. In preparation for that blessed and awful event men must repent, accept Jesus as Messiah, and be baptized in his name. Baptism as a sign of purification was already known to the Jews, and from them the rite passed to Christianity. When a convert had been baptized in the name of Jesus,

he became a member of the Christian society. He then went on stated occasions with his fellow-believers to a house of one of the brethren to pray, to sing hymns, and to "break bread." The "breaking of bread" is the name given to the common meal. Whenever Christians ate together it is probable that the whole meal, and not any single part of it, was at first called the communion-meal, or Lord's Supper. It was a sign of brotherhood and a means of realizing the constant presence of the spirit of Jesus. At these gatherings religious emotions were often highly excited. Under this excitement some of the brethren would pour out torrents of words either as a sermon or a prayer. Sometimes these words were strange and incoherent utterances that no one could understand. Yet this rapture of feeling, and this profuseness of speech, were regarded with reverence by the assembly even when the words were unintelligible, because the Spirit of God was then thought to be working in the speaker and giving him the "gift of tongues." Nothing in early Christianity is more extraordinary than this "gift of tongues." Ardent religious devotion was undoubtedly at the bottom of it; but much of it was due to the temporary unbalancing of the reason caused by overwhelming emotional disturbance.

Finally, we may add, the sense of brotherhood

was so strong that at Jerusalem there was practised for a time a certain communism, that is, a holding of property in common. This practice of early Christian life did not last long or spread widely. But for a time it did exist at least at Jerusalem, and the legend of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), which for many reasons it is impossible to accept as fact, shows us that there were some members that decidedly objected to it.

Let us note as we close this chapter that the followers of Jesus were not at first called Christians. That name arose in Antioch some years after the events in Jerusalem which we have been narrating. Originally the first believers were called disciples. A little later their own term for themselves was "brethren" and sometimes "the saints." But "the brethren" was no doubt their favorite word; and surely no other title could better express the spirit of Jesus who had forbidden the word "master" and had commanded that the greatest of his followers should do loving service to the least.

CHAPTER IV

PAUL THE APOSTLE

1. *Paul's Early Life.*

Now we are to consider the life of the man who was to cause Christianity to break away definitely from Judaism and become an independent religion, a man too who was to be the chief agent in spreading the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire and making the name of Jesus known to the ends of the earth. Paul the Apostle is this man. He is one of the mightiest men of history and the work that he accomplished has perhaps never been surpassed. No historical character could be more worthy of our careful attention.

Paul was not the name given him by his parents. He was first called Saul after the great king of Israel. But as he was a Roman citizen he had a right to a Latin name and in course of time he took the name by which we know him, Paul. It is probable, however, that to his fellow-Jews he was always Saul.

Paul was born in Tarsus, then the capital city of the province of Cilicia. Tarsus was a city of note in that day and Paul to the end of his life was proud of it. "I am a citizen of no mean city," he says. (Acts 21: 39) In the first place as a great center of trade, people thronged there from all parts of the world — Greeks, Romans, Asiatics. It was thus a cosmopolitan city with all the breadth of mind that comes from the mingling of many peoples. And in the second place it was the home of culture and learning. It was a university town to which came philosophers, rhetoricians, and students of law both to teach and to learn. Greek was the language chiefly spoken.

Strict Jews like Paul did not frequent the heathen schools. Believing that they alone possessed the true religion, and that in the Old Testament they had the book which contained the highest wisdom of the world, Jews held aloof from pagan learning, and indeed dreaded it. Too much Gentile schooling, they feared, might weaken the faith of Israel. Paul, then, did not receive an extensive classical education, and while he always wrote Greek, it is not classic Greek. But one thorough training he did receive, and that was in the Hebrew Old Testament and in the comments and explanations of it given by the great rabbis.

2. *Paul in Jerusalem: His First Acquaintance with Christianity.*

That he might perfect himself in this study he went to Jerusalem and became the pupil of one of the greatest rabbis, Gamaliel by name. Paul's Judaism was of a very strict sort. There were liberal sections in the Jewish church even then, particularly the Jews who lived in Alexandria or had studied there. These Alexandrian Jews tried especially to combine Greek philosophy and Greek literature with Judaism; and desired that the study of Greek genius should go hand in hand with the study of the Old Testament. But Paul never belonged to these liberalizing groups of his fellow-believers. He was a Pharisee, a member of the most rigidly orthodox and least liberal party in Judaism. Furthermore he was a devotee. That is, he observed all the commands of the law of Moses conscientiously; he thought much of religion and prayed much; and he gave himself up without reserve to the service of the faith of his fathers.

Paul was in Jerusalem when the first tumults arose over the preaching of the disciples of Jesus. He perceived that the followers of the Nazarene were increasing from day to day. He saw and shared the anxiety of the other Pharisees lest

the hated believers in the Crucified should win over too many Jews and grow too strong to be suppressed. So with characteristic intensity and vigor he approved the plan of grinding down the Christian movement by merciless persecution. He was one of the chief movers in the killing of Stephen. He even took a personal part in that brutal murder, holding the cloaks of the men who stoned to death the first martyr. By this zeal he became a young man of mark and promise to the Jewish leaders at Jerusalem. When accordingly an expedition was to be sent out from Jerusalem to Damascus to arrest and bring back Christian converts who had fled to the latter city, Paul was selected as the leader. For who was more devoted to Judaism than he? Who more bitter against the Nazarene? Who would bear more willingly the fatigue of the long journey to Damascus? Who would rejoice more at leading back in chains the miserable converts to the Galilean sect?

3. *Paul's Conversion.*

Paul then set out for Damascus, "breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." (Acts 9: 1) But before that journey ended, there happened the most momentous event in the history of early Christianity, indeed, one of the most momentous in the history of the

world — nothing less than the sudden and apparently miraculous conversion of Paul to the faith of the disciples of Jesus. When he was nearing the city of Damascus, we are told, a flash of brilliant light from heaven surrounded Paul. He fell to the earth and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Who art thou, Lord?" asked Paul. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," was the answer. The voice then told him to go into Damascus where he would learn what work he was to do. Paul, rising up, was led into the city, for he was suddenly deprived of sight, and not until after three days could he see again. From this moment Paul the persecutor became the most intense and ardent follower of Jesus.

CHAPTER V

THE CONVERSION OF PAUL

1. *The Different Narratives of the Conversion.*

In trying to understand Paul's conversion, we may remark that in the three accounts we have of it in the ninth, twenty-second and twenty-sixth chapters of Acts there are certain statements that are either contradictory or at least hard to reconcile. We are told in the first of these accounts that the heavenly light fell on Paul, while the third states that it encircled his companions also. In chapter nine we read that Paul fell to the ground; but in chapter twenty-six that those who were with him likewise fell. Again, the ninth chapter of Acts declares that Paul's companions heard the heavenly voice, while the twenty-second chapter says that they saw the light, but heard no voice. Finally, the first account asserts that the Lord revealed to Ananias that Paul would become a great preacher to the Gentiles; the second account says that Ananias told Paul that he would be a messenger of the faith "unto all men," but does not indicate how Ananias got this information; while

the third narrative omits any mention of Ananias and declares that the Lord revealed to Paul directly that he was to be a missionary to the Gentiles.

2. *The Miracles Not Believed by All the Early Christians.*

To these difficulties in the text we must add this further difficulty. Paul was convinced that he had been converted by a personal apparition of Jesus; and just as strongly was he convinced that his appointment as apostle to the Gentiles came immediately from the Lord by revelation. He was never officially chosen an apostle as Matthias was. And yet he says that he was just as much an apostle as any of the original Twelve for these two reasons: that he had seen Jesus, ["Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (I. Cor. 9:1)] and that Jesus commissioned him as apostle to the Gentiles and gave him by revelation the gospel he was to preach. Of this gospel he says, "Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it; but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:12) Paul then makes in his own behalf these three claims: 1. He was converted by a vision of Jesus. 2. He was made an apostle by Jesus. 3. He received the doctrine which he preached as a revelation from Jesus.

Now we know that many of the early Christians denied the last two of these statements. As we shall see later, a whole section of the church of that day not only rejected the distinctive preaching of Paul but thought it blasphemy. In consequence they denied him the right to be called an apostle and refused to allow his plea that Jesus had so appointed him. Certainly we are justified in thinking that men who thus looked upon Paul would go further and reject his fundamental claim to miraculous conversion. Thus we find that Paul could not convince even all the Christians of his time that he had been favored with a personal communication from the Lord. Why in such circumstances did not Ananias come forward in defense of Paul to say that he, too, had had it revealed to him that Paul was to be the apostle to the Gentiles? Or, if Ananias was dead, why did not those Christians in Damascus to whom Ananias would have told his revelation concerning Paul come forward to vindicate the accused apostle?

Asking questions like these, we discover that the miracles which form part of the narratives of Paul's conversion by no means made the impression upon the Christians of that time which we should expect. And this could be the case, we are forced to conclude, only because the miracles were not supported by evidence strong

enough to make other people believe them as firmly as Paul did.

3. *Paul Was Given to Visions.*

Finally we have a right to be cautious in admitting the reality of the miracles attending Paul's conversion from the fact that Paul was given to visions. He had a trance while praying in the Temple at Jerusalem and heard and saw the Lord. (Acts 22: 17–21) He saw and listened to an angel on shipboard. (Acts 27: 23–24) He believed that when certain of the early Christians moved by excitement babbled unintelligible words, it was God's Spirit that spoke (I Cor: 14); whereas we may be sure that these "tongues" were simply the result of overstrained emotions. He was caught up even to the third heaven and heard unspeakable words unlawful for man to utter. (II. Cor. 12: 2–4) He went up to Jerusalem by "revelation." (Gal. 2: 2) Visions, revelations, and beliefs of this sort are true and real to the person thus speaking of them. But we cannot be sure that they are in truth what they appear to him. An intense and high-strung nature like Paul's, living as he did in an atmosphere of miracle, may be led into fancying that God is the author of an experience which is, in fact, produced by his own emotions.

4. *Paul's Preparation for Conversion.*

But in spite of all the cautions that it is proper for us to feel in reading of the miracles of Paul's conversion, the fact remains that he was converted — suddenly and mysteriously converted. How did this conversion take place? How did the persecuting Pharisee all at once become an ardent believer in Jesus? How did so great a mental and spiritual change occur in him as to make him even think that he saw an apparition of Jesus and heard the command to be the disciple of Jesus?

This question leads us to consider the state of Paul's mind and soul before his conversion. Paul, as we can infer from his writings as an apostle of Jesus, had been dissatisfied with Judaism even while a zealous Pharisee. He faithfully did the works of the law of Moses; but his searching, anxious question was "How can I be saved by these works? Works are of the flesh, done by a poor sinner. Being of the flesh, how can they bring me justification, which is divine? If I am justified and saved, I must be lifted up into a divine life. But no works of ritual, of law of Jewish observance can thus lift me up; for it is I who do these things, and I cannot by them raise myself out of the flesh-life into the spirit-life." If God is to save man, He must

therefore send some one who is godlike to open for us the way to the life of grace and justification. Man cannot reach salvation, so God must stoop down, as it were, to lift him up to salvation.

This was Paul's scruple and worry even as a Pharisee. Then naturally came his further question: "Who is this one sent of God, or to be sent, thus to admit us into a glorified life?" This question may have been in his heart as he saw Stephen die, as he saw other followers of Jesus profess their radiant faith in the crucified Prophet, and accept persecution and shame for his sake. It was clear to Paul that with the religion of Jesus a new breath of life had come to Judaism. A fresh, pure inspiration was pouring out upon Palestine from the blessed memory of Jesus. He saw men and women joyous in this memory, happy in this discipleship. He beheld breaking through the crust of Pharisaic ritual this clear, clean stream of spiritual power renewing the life of hundreds of his fellow-Jews. He had never seen anything like it in Judaism. He had never known such eagerness and happiness and zeal as were shown by these believers in Jesus. And this he witnessed just as his own faith in the efficacy of the Jewish law was assailed by doubts. What if, after all, this despised Jesus of Galilee was the one sent of God to lead us into the godlike life!

Some such state of hesitation, of doubt, of confusion we have every reason to believe was in the soul of Paul as he set out on that journey to Damascus. Just how the crisis came, just what condition of nerves, of feelings, of scruples he was in at the moment of conversion we do not know. All we do know is that he was prepared for conversion by his doubts of the Jewish faith, and by his experience of the joy and peace felt by the followers of Jesus. Others too who had hated the Galileans had been converted. Probably some who had stood upon the hill of Calvary and approved the crucifixion were now disciples of the Lord. So with Paul. Like them he was overcome by the power of the life and memory of Jesus. Like them he was convinced that such a man must have been sent by God, and been the promised one of all the ages. In Jesus Paul saw that agent of God who was to put an end to the observance of rite and ceremony, and lead men by the way of faith to a new life, a new manhood, a new union and communion with God. Of this much we may be certain. What truth there may be in an actual apparition of Jesus to the physical vision of Paul is a matter which must be forever undetermined.

CHAPTER VI

PAUL THE MISSIONARY

1. *Paul's Missionary Apprenticeship.*

NEVER had there been a convert to the Gospel who so burned with zeal to spread the faith of Jesus as Paul of Tarsus. Intense by nature, holding his convictions passionately, courageous, decisive, and dominating, Paul was aflame with desire to tell the world of the new religion. Not for him was the placid path of a commonplace fidelity, the quiet of private devotion. He must cry aloud the belief that had seized his soul. He must preach to men. He must persuade them; he must command them to know and follow Jesus.

After his conversion Paul went for three years into Arabia, a period of his life of which we have no details. Returning, he went to Jerusalem, a very bold act, reappearing as a renegade Jew among those who once had held him in such esteem. His hope was to convert many of his former companions there; but he failed. He made no impression on the capital city (Acts 22: 17–18), and left for his own province of Cilicia.

There he worked until Barnabas, a man of great importance in the early church, summoned him to Antioch, the capital of Syria, the city in which the followers of Jesus were first called Christians.

2. *Paul's First Mission-Journey.*

After having thus done, as it were, apprentice work in missionary preaching for seven years, Paul was now to begin the great mission journeys which planted the faith of Christ in nearly every part of the Roman Empire. With the more experienced Barnabas, Paul set out from Antioch. They sailed to Cyprus and went through the whole island preaching Christ. One convert of great distinction they made, Sergius Paulus, who believed, it is said, after witnessing a miracle done by Paul. (Acts 13: 7–12) Sailing from Paphos they came to Perga in Pamphylia. From there they traveled a hundred miles of mountain roads to Antioch of Pisidia, the capital of South Galatia. Paul's practice in his missions was to attack the large cities first. Furthermore it was his custom to go at once to the synagogue at the Sabbath meeting, and there to announce Jesus as Messiah. He first preached to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. Paul's sermon in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, given in Acts 13: 16–41, led to exciting consequences. A controversy arose, bitter feeling was

aroused, and Paul and Barnabas were driven out of the city. They went to Iconium, eighty miles away. But after a time they were driven out with stones and fled to Lystra, twenty miles distant, and then to Derbe, thirty miles further.

At Lystra a picturesque incident happened. Paul had cured a crippled man, and thereby gained such prestige among the simple-hearted heathen that they thought Paul and Barnabas were gods. Barnabas, they said, was Jupiter, and Paul, Mercury. The two missionaries had hard work to prevent the people from sacrificing oxen in their honor. (Acts 14: 8–18)

But there was another side to their stay at Lystra. Certain Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, enraged against Paul and Barnabas, and stirred up the people against them. Paul was stoned until he fell unconscious. Thinking that he was dead they dragged him out of the city. (Acts 14: 19–20) But Paul's mighty heart was dauntless and on the next day he set out for Derbe, blackened and bruised as he was from the stoning. And as soon as he reached there, he stood up before Jew and Gentile and preached the Gospel. Such were the early disciples of Jesus, and such was Paul, the greatest of them all.

Soon after this Paul and Barnabas reached Antioch in Syria, finishing their mission-journey, which had lasted about two years.

3. *Consequences of this First Journey.*

This first extensive missionary enterprise in the history of the early church taught a good many lessons. First of all it was clear that the heathen were ready to listen to the Gospel, and that great numbers of them might be converted to Christ.

In the second place it was equally clear that not many Gentiles would be converted if they were required to submit to the exasperating and burdensome details of the Jewish law. It will be remembered that the Jewish converts to Christianity observed the law of Moses just as strictly as before they accepted Christ. Indeed, they believed that to keep the Law was as necessary to salvation as was belief in the Messiahship of Jesus. Paul and Barnabas, believing that Jesus had freed men from the burden of the Law, did not force their Gentile proselytes to submit to it. "Faith in Jesus saves you, not the Law," was Paul's message. Now this action of Paul in freeing the Gentiles from the Law caused immense scandal to Christians of Jewish origin. So intense was the quarrel on this point between the Jewish-minded Christians and the Pauline Christians, that it brought upon Paul an implacable hatred, and threatened to destroy Christianity altogether.

Thirdly, this journey had important results for Paul personally. It marked him as the ablest missionary to the Gentiles in the Christian church. And more than that, it gave him the right to be ranked with the apostles. Paul, as we have said before, was not given this rank by the other leaders of the church, nor did he gain it because of his claim to a miraculous conversion. He was unofficially granted it because in this first journey he had done great things in the Christian cause and had hazarded his life for Christ. (Acts 15: 26) Hereafter if Paul's right to the title of apostle was called into question, he might say with truth, "I have labored more abundantly than they."

4. *The Council of Jerusalem.*

But that which gave Paul his greatest confidence, that which emboldened him to go on with the Gentile missions, was the approval by the leaders of the church of his manner of receiving heathen converts. We will repeat once more, since this point is of the utmost importance, that Paul did not require these converts to submit to the Jewish law. "Christ has abolished the Law," said Paul. "Christ has not abolished the Law, and no one can be saved who does not accept the Law as well as accept Christ," replied the Christians who had been born Jews. Paul

defied these opponents and claimed that his Gentile converts who did not observe the purification, the feasts, the fasts, and other ordinances of the Law, were just as truly Christians as any converted Pharisee or scribe.

This was a controversy vital to Christianity. If the Jewish-born Christians won their point and forced all heathen-born Christians to obey the law of the Jews, the Gentile accessions to the church would be very few. In that event Christianity could never have become a world religion, but must have remained simply a Jewish sect. But if Paul won, the religion of Christ would be made fit for the whole world, and would offer spiritual salvation to all men on terms of perfect equality.

It was probably at the end of Paul's first mission-journey that the dispute was brought to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas were there to defend their side and we may be sure they defended it vigorously. Peter, James and the other leading men of the church, having seen the valiant work done by the two brave missionaries who were the defendants in the case, pronounced judgment. The judgment was that the Gentile converts need not submit to the law of the Jews, with two minor exceptions:

1. They were to abstain from meats offered to idols.

2. They were not to eat blood or the flesh of strangled animals. From all other prescriptions of the Jewish law they were free.

The meeting at which this great victory for spiritual freedom was won was called the Council of Jerusalem. It is described in the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Acts. Few as are the words there given to it, it is the gravest event in the history of the early church. Christianity was now freed from bondage to Judaism and Pharisaism. It stood at last an unshackled religion, fit to be the faith of all men, as adapted to Roman, Greek, or Asiatic, as to the Jews among whom it had arisen.

CHAPTER VII

PAUL'S SECOND JOURNEY

(Acts 15: 36–18: 22)

1. *Paul's New Standing in the Christian Community.*

PAUL entered upon his second apostolic journey in circumstances different from those of the first. He had become a recognized leader, worthy by character, by devotion, and by missionary success, to rank with the apostles themselves. There were some who denied this, as we shall see. He had become beyond question the leading preacher to the Gentiles. He had just won a great victory at the Council of Jerusalem, a victory which filled his heart with hope for numerous conversions. And in consequence of this victory he had attracted to himself the love and trust of the Gentile Christians. To them he was the chief apostle, the friend and father for whom, in his own phrase, they would have plucked out their eyes. (Gal. 4: 15)

On the first journey Barnabas had been the leader, Paul, the assistant. On the second, Paul was so conscious of his leadership that he stoutly

opposed Barnabas who wished to take John Mark as a third missionary companion. This John Mark had been with them before and had deserted Paul and Barnabas in Pamphylia. Paul had not forgotten nor forgiven this desertion and would have no more to do with so inconstant a man. Barnabas pleaded for John Mark and sharp words passed between him and Paul. The end of the contention was that Paul left both Barnabas and John Mark, took Silas as companion, and set forth. That he should have dared thus to dispute with a man of the standing of Barnabas shows the difference in Paul's position in the Christian community. (Acts 15: 37–40)

2. *Paul Carries the Gospel to Europe.*

Passing through Phrygia and North Galatia, Paul arrived at Troas, where he had his famous vision and heard "the Macedonian cry." A vision appeared to him in the night and a man of Macedonia seemed standing by who besought him, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." (Acts 16: 9) Obedient to the call, Paul set sail from Troas and soon stood on the soil of Europe. A great day indeed that was when the Apostles of the Nations landed in the country that had given birth to Alexander the Great. Alexander had conquered the world by arms. Paul, alone,

and strong only in faith and courage, was conquering the world with the sword of the spirit. Europe lay before him now, and in presence of that boundless opportunity we know his stout heart felt its resolution strengthened and its joy increased.

Philippi was the city in which Paul first preached in Europe, and a certain Lydia, a woman who was a "seller of purple," was his first European convert. Here, too, Paul and Silas had their bitter portion of persecution. They were beaten with rods and flung into prison. This much we may feel sure in admitting, though the narrative which tells us of the persecution contains elements of what we may set down as folk legend. (Acts 16: 16–34)

Paul next went to Thessalonica, the modern Saloniki, the great capital city of Macedonia. The usual tumult stirred up by the hostile Jews occurred here and Paul was forced to flee to Berœa. Driven from here also, he went to Athens. The most famous city of the ancient world listened to Paul as it listened to a hundred wandering teachers or devotees, respectfully enough but sceptically. Paul made only a slight impression upon the Athenians. Part of the address he gave on the Areopagus, or "hill of Mars," we have in Acts 17: 22–31.

Paul seems to have been disheartened by his

failure in Athens, and perhaps by his expulsion from Thessalonica; for he tells us that he entered his next city, Corinth, "in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling." (I. Corinthians 2: 3) Not that we are to think that the apostle was afraid of anybody, or much concerned over his own safety. But like all noble souls who live for a great truth, he was downcast that the truth he lived for spread so slowly and that men were so blind to it. If this was his feeling it must have been relieved at Corinth, for a vital and vigorous church was planted there. A quarrelsome church it turned out to be at times and Paul had to correct it vigorously. But he loved these Corinthians with all their faults and even in his chiding he says he has no desire to shame them, "but to admonish you as my beloved children." (I. Corinthians 4: 14) Eighteen months Paul spent at Corinth, and then, no doubt in restored spirits, he returned by way of Ephesus and Caesarea to Antioch.

3. *The Controversy with the Jewish Christians Breaks out Again.*

It was probably soon after Paul's arrival in Antioch from his second mission-journey that he had to fight once more his protracted battle for the exemption of Gentile Christians from the Jewish Law. He discovered to his disap-

pointment that this controversy had broken out again despite the decree of the Council of Jerusalem. And it had broken out in a particularly hateful form. Christians of Jewish birth had begun to take alarm at the growth of the Gentile churches founded by Paul. They perceived that, if this kept on, not Jews but Gentiles would be the predominant authority in the Christian church. Still worse, these rapidly increasing Gentiles were not observing the Law of Moses. The thought became intolerable to these Jewish Christians, that they who kept the Law strictly should not be accounted a whit better Christians than the Gentile converts who did not keep it; and that in a short time these non-legal Gentiles would greatly outnumber them. Vexed and resentful at this state of affairs, the Jewish Christians had recourse to methods that we cannot consider honorable. They began sending, throughout the regions in which Paul had preached, their agents, whose business it was to conduct a counter-mission against Paul, and to attack his authority and standing as an apostle. Because of the Council of Jerusalem they were no longer able to say that no Christian could be saved who refused to submit to the Law. But they did say that only such Gentile converts as would accept and practice the Law could possess the full heritage of Christian grace and Christian

rewards. The Law given by Moses, they maintained, was binding forever, and those alone who were faithful to it had the fulness of God's friendship.

As for Paul, they denied that he had a right to be called an apostle. They insisted that he had never seen Christ; that he had never been elected or commissioned to the apostolic office; and that, as wishing to set aside the Law of Moses written in the Old Testament, he was a dangerous renegade to the expressed will of God.

This was the dangerous condition of things that revealed itself to Paul returning from his long journey to Macedonia and Greece. Worst of all, Paul perceived that this attempt to turn his converts against him, to destroy his influence, and to put upon the religion of Christ the intolerable burden of Jewish observances, was having a serious measure of success. Some of his own converts among the Gentiles were coming to believe, despite his warning, that they could not be perfect Christians without observing the Law, and others even doubted whether the great missionary who had led them to Christ had a right to be called an apostle.

To these wavering brethren Paul sent letters which clearly show how deeply he was hurt, and how earnestly he hoped that they would stand fast against Judaizers. "O foolish Galatians,"

he writes, "who did bewitch you?" (Gal. 3: 1) "Though an angel from heaven should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema!" (Gal. 1: 8) "Am I become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Gal. 4: 16) "I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet am I not in knowledge." (II Cor. 11: 5–6)

The crisis of this long struggle came in Antioch. The apostle Peter had been for some time in Antioch and had at first mingled freely with the Gentile Christians who did not keep the Law. He even sat with them at table — a thing that no strict Jew would do with Gentiles. But presently the Judaizing Christians began to arrive in Antioch from Jerusalem. Naturally the church in Jerusalem under the leadership of James was the center of the pro-Jewish and anti-Pauline faction. These emissaries from Jerusalem so influenced Peter that he refused any longer to sit at table with Gentile Christians. So powerful indeed were these opponents of Paul that even Barnabas, Paul's former mission-comrade, was won over to their side. Then Paul arrived in Antioch. Seeing this dissension among Christ's disciples, seeing his own work threatened, and the future of the Gospel endangered, he acted with the courageous vigor that was his habit.

He withstood Peter "to the face." (Gal. 2: 11) He denounced the action of the Judaizers. He declared emphatically before them that "a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ." (Gal. 2: 16)

This is perhaps the most startling act in Paul's adventurous life. He, a late-comer to the missionary ranks, a former persecutor of Christians, a man suspected and denounced by some of the highest personages in the church, publicly opposes the apostle Peter and the emissaries of James, "the brother of the Lord"! We may be sure that the story of this daring deed flew through the whole church from Jerusalem to Corinth, from Thessalonica to Rome. To hundreds of Gentile converts it must have given courage to claim their equal rights as Christians; and to the Judaizers it must have been a declaration of independence that destroyed their last hope of victory, however stubbornly they were still to fight.

CHAPTER VIII

PAUL'S THIRD JOURNEY

1. *Paul at Ephesus.*

ENTERING upon his third mission-journey, Paul set his face toward Ephesus. Ephesus was then a magnificent city which, under the rule of Rome, had become the metropolis of the province of Asia. The pride of the city was the temple of Diana, or as the Greeks called this goddess, Artemis. This building was regarded as one of the wonders of the world. The Greek cities of Asia Minor had contributed of their wealth to build it, and the richest king of his time, Croesus of Lydia, whose name has become the synonym of riches, had given money to help raise its marble walls. Other kings had presented its one hundred twenty-seven columns. No more celebrated temple existed in the world than this of "Diana of the Ephesians." Within the temple was a miraculous statue of Diana which was believed to have fallen from heaven. (Acts 19: 35) Copies of this statue and replicas of the temple were sold by thousands in Ephesus.

This trade formed a large proportion of the income of certain woodcarvers and silversmiths in the city who made these idolatrous objects. This was the class that was to arouse an infuriated mob against the Apostle.

Paul, of course, as soon as he arrived in Ephesus began boldly to preach "that there are no gods that are made with hands" and that Diana "should even be deposed from her magnificence, whom all Asia worshipeth." (Acts 19: 26–27) This to the Ephesians was blasphemy, and to the makers of idols a menace of bankruptcy. Naturally such words would make little impression when first spoken by a wandering, unknown preacher. But when Paul stayed in the city more than two years, and had converted many, and had in reality hurt the trade of the silversmiths, his preaching became a serious matter to the disciples of Diana. Their long-nursed resentment broke out at last, when one Demetrius, a silversmith, led a great throng to the amphitheater where for two hours they remained shouting: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19: 34) After this uproar Paul departed for Macedonia.

Having visited his converts in Macedonia and Greece, Paul determined to go to Jerusalem. On the way he stopped at Miletus and sent for the Elders of the church at Ephesus. The Elders

came and heard from him the sorrowful words that this was his farewell and that they would never see his face again. Perhaps nothing in the Scriptures is more touching than the parting at Miletus: "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more." (Acts 20: 36–38)

2. *Paul at Jerusalem.*

The last sad chapter in the life of the great apostle opens with his arrival in Jerusalem. There he was amidst his enemies, his bitter enemies, some of whom, when they heard of his coming, took a vow to kill him. He had told men that they need not keep the Law of Moses; that they might please God and be saved without it. That was enough to arouse the fanatical hatred of the Jews of the capital. A mob, at the instigation of certain Jews from Asia, dragged Paul from the temple itself, and were beating him to death when Roman soldiers arrived and rescued him. Beaten as he was, the dauntless apostle faced the throng and addressed them in the Hebrew tongue. He told again of his Jewish birth, of his persecuting the Lord's followers, of his conversion, and of his heavenly commission

to be an apostle to the Gentiles. (Acts 22) They would not let him finish, but shouted, flung dust into the air, and cast their garments about wildly, until the captain of the troop guarding Paul ordered him into the castle.

Events now came in quick succession. Claudius Lysias, commander of the garrison at Jerusalem, discovered that Paul was a Roman citizen. As a Roman citizen he had legal rights that had to be carefully protected. For one thing it was unlawful to scourge him. (Acts 22: 25) Furthermore he might not be exposed to the danger of assassination. When, therefore, through Paul's nephew, Claudius Lysias found that a plot to assassinate him had been formed, he determined to send him away under heavy guard to Felix, the Governor at Caesarea.

3. *Paul at Caesarea and Rome: His Death.*

Paul, after a fruitless trial (Acts 24) before Felix, a corrupt and unprincipled man, was kept in custody in Caesarea for two years. Felix was succeeded by Festus who, desirous of gaining the favor of the Jews, asked Paul if he would not go back to Jerusalem for trial. Paul, knowing well what chance of justice there would be at Jerusalem, refused, and uttered the mighty words, "I appeal to Caesar!" This appeal was the

right of a Roman citizen who wished to be tried by an imperial tribune, and not by a provincial court. For Paul it had these two consequences. He would be tried not in Palestine, but in Rome; not by Jewish law, but by Roman. Before he was taken to Rome, however, he was summoned before Agrippa II, vassal-king of a portion of Palestine, and Bernice, sister to Agrippa, and delivered in their royal presence the address given in Acts 26. "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian," said Agrippa. We cannot be sure whether these words were in earnest or were an idle compliment; for both Agrippa and Bernice were worthless characters.

Paul had an exciting voyage to Rome, suffering shipwreck on the island of Malta, where he was forced to remain three months. (Acts 27 and 28) Disembarking at last at Puteoli, he set out for Rome to meet his glorious death. He was to wait for that death, however, for two years (five according to some calculations), during which time he enjoyed much liberty, and was free to preach, to instruct, and to make converts. "And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him." With these words the Acts of the

Apostles end. We may well be astonished that the book says nothing of Paul's death. However, we may conjecture from other sources that Paul was beheaded under the Emperor Nero in the year 67 A. D.

CHAPTER IX

PAUL'S CHARACTER AND SERVICE

1. *Paul's Character.*

THE whole history of Christianity has been stamped with the influence of Paul the Apostle. Hundreds of missionaries to foreign lands have taken him for their model and source of inspiration. Christian thinkers have spent lifetimes in studying him and interpreting his ideas. Churches have built creeds upon his teachings, or what they thought were his teachings. Reformers have looked to him as a kind of patron saint in their revolt from institutional authority, in their conscientious defiance to a narrow sectarianism such as the great apostle himself had denounced. And simple Christians throughout all the ages since he lived have been uplifted by the strength and faithfulness of his consecrated character. Let us delay on this point a moment to see how noble a figure of a man Paul is.

Consider his fidelity to his convictions; and how he was true to his best light, not counting the cost. He was one of the foremost young

men of the Jewish church, surrounded with admiration, entrusted with responsibility, destined for distinction and high honors. On all of this he turned his back without hesitation at the call of conscience to became a Christian. He saw his old friends turn to enemies. He felt their admiration change to hate. He heard himself hissed in the synagogue. He found himself shunned in the streets. All that we naturally hold dear, friendship, old associations, the admiration of teachers, the love of kinsfolk, he gave up forever when Duty spoke the word.

Then came the long labors of his thirty years as missionary. Trudging the highroads of Asia Minor, of Palestine, of Greece, beaten with rods, bruised with stoning, spied upon by false brethren, denounced by a large part of the Christian church, Paul is dauntless and forever faithful. Iron courage was in him, and a will that mocked at hardship and opposition. Yet through all the trials he kept a tender heart. He could be indignant, but was never bitter. He experienced the fragility of his old friendships, yet he was prompt to make new friends, such as Timothy and Titus, and he cleaved to them as simply and ardently as if his heart had never been bruised by a disappointed trust. Paul is one of those knights and noblemen of God who are stern in meeting duty, yet quick to give affection; who

are unwilling to cause pain to others, yet are resolved at any cost to be true to conscience; who are so devoted to humanity that no offenses can embitter them, and so faithful to God that no sacrifices can turn them from His service.

2. *Paul's Writings.*

The four "chief epistles" of Paul, as they are called by critics and students, are the letters to: 1. The Romans; 2. The Galatians; 3 and 4. The Corinthians. These are called "chief epistles" because they most fully contain Paul's characteristic thoughts on the religious life, on the relation between Judaism and the Gospel, on salvation, sin, and the nature and mission of Jesus. Besides these four, there are six other epistles generally acknowledged as Paul's, namely, to the Ephesians; to the Philippians; to the Colossians; two to the Thessalonians; and to Philemon. Three other epistles are written as though by Paul, two to Timothy, and one to Titus. But these three are probably not Paul's writings, although it may be that the unknown author who composed them made more or less use of a letter or letters of Paul that are now lost to us. The long epistle to the Hebrews was once reckoned as Paul's, but this is no longer held by the majority of students.

3. *Paul's Services to Christian Life and Thought.*

The first and greatest service done to Christianity by the apostle Paul we have already seen, namely his deliverance of the new religion from the observance of the Mosaic Law. Let us say once more what is well worth repeating, that if Christianity had kept on insisting that Gentile converts should obey the law of the Jews, Christianity never would have won the Graeco-Roman world; it never would have been the religion of Europe; it never would have been other than a small Jewish sect, almost wholly confined to Palestine. Christianity became fit to be a world religion when it declared that salvation did not require the rites and ordinances of the Law, but only faith in and fidelity to Jesus. And this step Christianity took through Paul.

A second service, akin to this just mentioned, which the Christian religion owes to Paul, was that he taught it anew to recognize the true brotherhood of man and the equality of all nations before God. Jesus had taught this, as we know, and made it one of the fundamentals of his Gospel. It, however, had been but dimly understood. The Jewish Christians clung to the idea that they were the chosen race; that the chief honors and dignities of Christ's kingdom,

here and hereafter, belonged to them by right; and that the Gentiles were admitted to salvation only by favor and on condition of accepting a sort of adoption into Judaism. Jews were the children; all others, only the step-children of the Kingdom of Messiah.

Paul did away with this assumed superiority. He was, indeed, proud to be a Jew, and he firmly believed that the Jews had been God's elect. But in the new spiritual kingdom of the Lord Jesus, there was neither bond nor free, Greek nor barbarian, Jew nor Gentile. All were freely and coequally offered the grace and truth of Jesus, all called to be members of the one head who is Christ, as they are children of the one God and Father of us all. In this splendid reiteration of his Master's word, Paul put an end to racial disdain and theological aristocracy, and proclaimed the oneness of the whole family of mankind, and the equal opportunity of all for gaining favor with God. We must not, however, misunderstand or exaggerate his teaching on this point. Paul had no blame for slavery. He took slavery for granted as nearly everybody did in that day. He held certain views upon the subjection of women to their husbands and fathers which we have considerably modified. He sometimes judged too harshly the pagan neighbors of his Christian communities. We

are not saying that Paul's view of human equality was perfect. But it is beyond question that he enlarged and purified the notion of brotherhood; that he made spiritual merit the sole ground for God's favor; and that he recalled Jewish Christians, who were inclined to be proud, and Greek Christians, who at times tended to be supercilious, to the humaneness that was in Jesus.

4. *Paul's Teaching on the Inner Life.*

Finally let us note one other mighty service of this remarkable man. He deepened the inner life of Christendom and made its piety more profound. The tendency of both Jewish and Gentile converts was to win God's favor by *doing something* that they thought religious. They performed a rite; they uttered holy words; they purified themselves with water; they made an offering in a temple, and so on, and fancied that this external act made them more pleasing to God. Against this, Paul forever insists that religion is from within. He speaks of "putting on Christ," that is, making our whole inner life of thought and aim and wish like the inner life of Jesus. He denounces the life of "flesh," that is, the life of selfishness, and exhorts us to live in the "spirit," that is, in obedience to the higher will which is one with God's will. He tells us

that if the Holy Spirit is really within us, we shall show the fruits of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law." (Gal. 5: 22–23) He crowns his great admonitions to live this inner religion by the thrilling promise that our heart and soul may be so conformed to the will of God and the spirit of Jesus that at last it will be as though Christ actually dwelt within us (Gal. 2: 20) and we may say that our life is hid with Christ in God.

Paul as a rule scorns all rites and works; for they cannot sanctify a man; and with all the ardor of his nature he summons Christians to a deep, thoughtful devotion, to a solid and real sonship to God and resemblance to the Lord.

CHAPTER X

SOME PERVERSIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

1. *The Original Simplicity of the Gospel.*

At a very early time in Christian history, from Paul's time onward, indeed, there began to appear in the Christian communities serious departures from the simplicity of Jesus. Jesus had made religion to consist of the love of God, the earnest seeking of God's will, enthusiasm for God's kingdom, and an untiring and affectionate service of one's fellow-man. These high aims he believed that he was sent by God to proclaim. He further believed, it seems clear, that he was the Messiah sent of God to prepare a kingdom not of earthly splendor, but of righteousness and love. This was the faith of Jesus and the substance of the original Gospel. No intricate creed was contained in it, no deep theology, nothing that the peasants who first heard it could not easily understand.

2. *Two Departures from this Simplicity.*

But with Paul a new set of ideas became attached to this early and simple faith. Paul,

properly wishing to show that Jesus was more than merely the Jewish Messiah, made him the center of the whole world's history. This was a splendid vision and a worthy purpose, but in expressing it Paul stated certain dogmas that Jesus never uttered, and opened the way to creeds that Jesus would not have understood.

For example, Paul says that because of the sin of Adam, the first man, all men are born in sin and are under God's condemnation. And furthermore, because they are born in sin they cannot by any effort of their own please God and gain salvation. Now here are two beliefs to which Jesus gives no countenance whatever. He never refers to Adam, nor to original sin, nor to humanity as a lost race. And no notion could possibly be further from his thought than that men by their own effort cannot win their Father's favor. Jesus distinctly and constantly tells men not how far they are from God, but how near they are to Him. Not once does he say that they have inherited corruption from Adam; but many times he says that they can be pure of heart, and that if they are pure of heart they shall see God; that if they have a humble and childlike spirit they shall enter the heavenly kingdom; that if they have sin, but repent sincerely, God will receive them as a father receives a prodigal son; and that if they love

God and their brethren, they have fulfilled entirely the law of the Most High.

3. *The Blood-Redemption Dogma.*

With Paul also begins a belief which later times developed to its full extent, the belief that the crucifixion and death of Jesus was a blood-sacrifice to God, averting from us the anger of God who now saves us, the guilty, because he has killed Jesus, the innocent, and made him a substitute-victim for us. This idea that God required blood to satisfy His wrath or His justice, and refused to save men until that blood-offering was made Him, is a terrible shock to our moral sense. We cannot understand a God who will not forgive without bloodshed; nor a God who slays the innocent that the guilty may escape. This whole idea is utterly foreign to the genuine words of Jesus. No such God is the Heavenly Father whom he preached, and no such belief concerning the crucifixion is to be found in the earliest preaching of Peter as given in the book of Acts.

4. *Orders and Apostolic Succession.*

The natural leaders of the Christian communities were the apostles. Wherever an apostle lived he presided over the gathering of the Christians for worship; he was the judge to

whom the faithful deferred; he presided at the "breaking of bread"; he was preacher, supervisor, and leader. When no apostle was at hand to take this leadership, a man was generally chosen who possessed some "gift of the Spirit"; that is, one who was eloquent in preaching, or fervent in prayer, or who was reputed to have worked miracles. But if no such man were available, the local community selected its leader from among the men who had long been Christians, an "elder," in other words, a man old — if not in years, at least in the service of the Lord. These "elders" were in some cases called "bishops." The word bishop means overseer, and "overseeing" rather accurately describes the duties of the more responsible elders. First of all they presided at the common worship and at the communion service, and had to see to it that all things were done decently and in order. Then each bishop had the supervision of the collections made in his congregation for the poor, and finally, his was the task of watching over the morals of his flock, of strengthening them in time of persecution, and of protecting them from false teachers.

The bishop was therefore first of all a substitute for an apostle or a gifted prophet or preacher. Secondly, he bore the main responsibility for the good order, the piety, and the

Christian example of the community. And in the third place, we may remember that it was his business not to announce new truth, but to hold fast to the traditions handed down. As the apostles died, and the "gifts" of unusual men became fewer, the bishop rose in importance. He became the first man in each Christian community, once the greater men to whom he had been inferior had passed from the scene. Thus in the course of time it happened that a divine origin was claimed for the bishop. He, as the custodian of beliefs and customs, was regarded as the direct successor of an apostle. And at last in the progress of years it was held that no one might act as minister to a Christian congregation, however eloquent, learned, or holy he might be, without having first received from a bishop "ordination" by the laying on of hands. This was in direct contradiction to the early custom of the church, according to which a preacher or teacher who had the gift of preaching or teaching, was by that very gift accepted as a guide of the Lord's people.

Here then we have four dogmas for which Jesus gives no justification:

1. That because of the sin of Adam all humanity is born in God's disfavor.
2. That man is unable of himself to please God, and must borrow Christ's righteous-

ness in order to gain divine friendship and grace.

3. That the death of Jesus was a blood-offering by which the wrath of God against mankind was appeased.
4. That Jesus appointed a special class of rulers, called bishops, to govern the church, and that no man can validly act as a Christian minister unless these bishops lay hands on him.

All of these are foreign to the thought of Jesus — all offend against his simplicity, his independence, and his teaching of the just soul's immediate union with the Eternal Father. The church began early to add these unwarranted inventions to the original Gospel. But though Christians might be taught some error, the splendid and holy life of Jesus shone before them to make them saintly in spite of the error. Good Christians then lived and live now not by their dogmas, which may be false, but by the example of Jesus, which is forever true.

CHAPTER XI

THE ROMAN PERSECUTIONS

THE Roman Empire tolerated practically every sort of religion within its boundaries; yet it persecuted the Christians. Only rarely did it take measures against certain rites that were revolting and unclean; but it dragged Christians before a tribunal and condemned them, merely because they were Christians, to torture and death. We must study the reasons for this strange discrimination. Why was an empire that granted freedom to the religion of Mithra, of Isis, of Attis, and of a hundred other gods, so fearful of the religion of Jesus and for a time so bent upon destroying it? It is an important question which leads us to close acquintance with the Christian communities of the first three hundred years and with their habits of life and worship.

1. *Reasons for Popular Hatred of the Christians.*

A. *Christian Intolerance.* — One of the first features of Christianity that a pagan of that time would notice and take offense at was the intolerance of Christians. To the pagan mind

any one of fifty or more gods was about as good as any other; all worships were equal; and it was every man's right to select for his special devotion whatever divinity he pleased. But the Christians denounced, often with the harshest words and most biting ridicule, the whole company of gods and said that they were nothing but devils. There are not, said these stern adherents of the new faith, several religions all alike. There is only one God, one Lord, one worship. All others are false and those who follow them will go to hell. Never had the ears of heathen listened to such defiance and scorn. The Jews too had believed in one God, but the Jews had never systematically attacked the idolatry of the Empire. And the Jews never had shown such zeal as the Christians in making converts or such power in drawing people away from the temples and altars of the gods. "It is plain," said the pagans, "that in these Christians we have a bitter and narrow sect, who, when they are strong enough, will absolutely forbid the worship of our gods." Here then is the first reason for that hatred of the Christians which grew in time to actual persecution.

B. *The Isolation of the Christians.* — Heathenism offered dangerous temptations to Christians of weak convictions. In the first place it possessed social prestige. The great personages of

the Empire from the Emperor down were worshipers of the gods whether they believed in them or not. From the beginning of its long history the Empire had held to its gods, had credited them with its victories, and had fled to them for refuge in defeat. The religion of the gods was therefore the accepted thing, to be professed outwardly, at least, by all who wished to be considered good Romans. On the other hand the Christians had for a long time no social distinction. They were for the most part poor, their gospel was unpopular, their religion had come from the despised Jews. The temptation then to weak and worldly-minded Christians was powerful to abandon their religion and find favor by crossing over to paganism.

Another seduction was this: Christians lived an austere and, a man of the world would have said, a joyless life. Joy they possessed as we know — that inner joy which abides in an aspiring heart, and resides in a consecrated spirit. But gaiety in a less lofty sense of the word they did not seek and often scorned. They were a stern people thinking little of this world and much of the next. We may well imagine that they enjoyed few festivities and permitted their young men and women very slight indulgence in the social pleasures or lighter graces of life.

Imagine then how a Christian youth or maiden

of unstable or frivolous mind would be attracted to the pagan worship. For in this worship there was much joy, there were games and dances, there were feasts and holidays, there were brilliant processions, impressive ceremonies, stately pageants.

In the face of such temptation the Christians retired into isolation. They lived by themselves as far as was possible. In the festival gaiety of their pagan neighbors they took not the slightest part. On days of the great processions they closed their houses tight. They touched the civic and social life around them as seldom as possible. There were even some extremists among them who denounced the classics of Greek and Roman literature and warned Christians against reading them. Others again urged Christians not to serve in the army, not to accept official position, not to become even schoolmasters.

The natural result of this holding off from the common life was to breed suspicion in the pagan mind. A new charge, to us a wild and foolish one, was flung in the faces of this grim Christian folk — the charge that they were "haters of the human race." And of course when a silent and mysterious people come to be called "haters of the human race," it will not be long before this general charge is made

specific, and all sorts of weird accusations are invented against them. Thus the Christians were accused of killing infants as part of their secret rites, of fierce carousal in their meetings, of worshiping a beast, and of much else that was absurd. But, absurd as they were, these opinions were the immediate preparation for open violence.

2. *The Legal Grounds for the Persecutions.*

A great part of the persecution of the Christians was mob persecution. That is, it was due to ruffians and to popular passion, often aided by some cowardly or complaisant official. But we must also remember this much more important fact, that the most severe persecution was deliberately organized by the Roman Empire on legal grounds, for the annihilation of Christianity. We have just seen some of the reasons for the unpopularity of the Christians, reasons which led up to the persecutions. Now we must learn just what legal charges the state made against Christians. The official accusation might be on any one of the four following grounds:

1. The Christians brought in a new and foreign god; and from old times Roman law forbade the introduction of new and

foreign gods that had not received the approval of the state.

2. The Christians held secret meetings for worship at night. This might be twisted into a violation of a law which forbade secret assemblies at night.
3. Christians formed associations which were often not legalized, and the law strictly forbade illegal clubs and societies.
4. Christians refused to make an offering of incense to the divinity of the Emperor. Under the emperors the degrading and ridiculous custom had fastened itself on Roman religion of considering the reigning Caesars divine. To make an offering before the image of the Emperor was held to be the highest act of patriotism. This the Christians could not do in conscience —and this refusal gave rise to the charge that they were unpatriotic and irreligous, and caused the severest of their persecutions.

The Romans in this cruel persecution of the Christians were not moved by any hatred of Jesus. They were willing that the Christians should continue to worship Jesus or pray to him, if only they did not refuse to acknowledge the existence of the state gods, and if they would

consent to offer religious homage to the divinity of the Emperor. The underlying reason therefore for the legal persecutions was political rather than religious; and rested upon the belief that the Christians were a menace to the state. The Christians protested that they were loyal to the state, but as they could not in conscience take any part in the state idolatry, they had to bear, and right nobly did they bear, the heavy penalties of their fidelity to principle.

CHAPTER XII

THE MARTYRDOMS: POLYCARP

1. *The Persecutions Not Constant.*

THE greater persecutions of the Christians began under the Emperor Nero (54–68 A.D.) and continued from time to time until shortly after the year 300 A.D. Not that persecution was constant during all this period. Far from it. There were long intervals in which Christianity was at peace, and because of peace flourished and grew strong. Indeed, there were only two attempts on a grand scale to annihilate the Christian religion. These attempts, terrible and bloody, and carried out with all the merciless efficiency of a highly organized state, took place under the Emperor Decius (249–251) and most of all under the Emperor Diocletian (284–305). But we are not to forget that over and above these two worst assaults on the religion of Christ, martyrdoms were occurring here and there throughout a stretch of three centuries. Even in times of general quiet, pagan mobs in this city or that might at any time demand Christian lives, and too often local officials yielded to the savage cry.

2. *The Death of Polycarp.*

Eusebius, the great historian of early Christianity, gives us the following account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, the head of the Christian community in Smyrna. Polycarp, an old man of perhaps eighty-six, died probably in the year 155 A.D. under the Emperor Antoninus Pius.

In the following account it may be noted that the phrase, "genius of the emperor," means the divinity that dwelt within the emperor and protected him.

"But the most admirable Polycarp continued undisturbed, preserved a quiet and unshaken mind, and determined to remain in the city. But being persuaded by his friends who entreated and exhorted him to retire secretly, he went out to a farm not far distant from the city and abode there with a few companions, night and day doing nothing but wrestle with the Lord in prayer, beseeching and imploring, and asking peace for the churches throughout the whole world. For this was always his custom. And three days before his arrest, while he was praying, he saw in a vision at night the pillow under his head suddenly seized by fire and consumed; and upon his awakening he immediately interpreted the vision to those that were present,

almost foretelling that which was about to happen, and declaring plainly to those that were with him that it would be necessary for him for Christ's sake to die by fire.

"Then, as those that were seeking him pushed the search with vigor, they say that he was again constrained by the solicitude of the brethren to go to another farm. Thither his pursuers came after no long time, and seized two of the servants there, and tortured one of them for the purpose of learning from him Polycarp's hiding-place. And coming late in the evening, they found him lying in an upper room, whence he might have gone to another house, but he would not, saying, 'The will of God be done.' And when he learned that they were present, as the account says, he went down and spoke to them with a very cheerful and gentle countenance, so that those who did not already know the man thought that they beheld a miracle when they observed his advanced age and the gravity and firmness of his bearing, and they marveled that so much effort should be made to capture a man like him.

"But he did not hesitate, but immediately gave orders that a table should be spread for them. Then he invited them to partake of a bounteous meal, and asked of them one hour that he might pray undisturbed. And when

they had given permission, he stood up and prayed, being full of the grace of the Lord, so that those who were present and heard him praying were amazed, and many of them now repented that such a venerable and godly man was about to be put to death. . . . And he was met by Herod, the captain of police, and by his father Nicetes, who took him into their carriage and sitting beside him endeavored to persuade him, saying, 'For what harm in saying, Lord Caesar, and sacrificing, and saving your life?' He at first did not answer; but when they persisted, he said, 'I am not going to do what you advise me.' And when they failed to persuade him, they uttered dreadful words and thrust him down with violence, so that as he descended from the carriage he lacerated his skin. But without turning round, he went on his way promptly and rapidly, as if nothing had happened to him, and was taken to the stadium. But there was such a tumult in the stadium that not many heard a voice from heaven, which came to Polycarp as he was entering the place: 'Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man.' And no one saw the speaker, but many of our people heard the voice. And when he was led forward, there was a great tumult as they heard that Polycarp was taken. Finally, when he came up, the proconsul asked if he were Polycarp.

And when he confessed that he was, he endeavored to persuade him to deny, saying, "Have regard for thine age,' and other like things, which it is their custom to say: 'Swear by the genius of Caesar; repent and say, Away with the Atheists.' But Polycarp, looking with dignified countenance upon the whole crowd that was gathered in the stadium, waved his hand to them and groaned and raising his eyes toward heaven, said, 'Away with the Atheists.' But when the magistrate pressed him and said, 'Swear, and I will release thee; revile Christ,' Polycarp said, 'Fourscore and six years have I been serving him, and he hath done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my king who saved me?'

"But when he again persisted, and said, 'Swear by the genius of Caesar,' Polycarp replied, 'If thou vainly supposest that I will swear by the genius of Caesar, as thou sayest, feigning to be ignorant who I am, hear plainly: I am a Christian. But if thou desirest to learn the doctrine of Christianity, assign a day and hear.' The proconsul said, 'Persuade the people.' But Polycarp said, 'As for thee, I thought thee worthy of an explanation; for we have been taught to render to princes and authorities ordained by God the honor that is due, so long as it does not injure us; but as for these, I do not esteem them the proper persons to whom to

make my defense.' But the proconsul said, 'I have wild beasts; I will throw thee to them unless thou repent.' But he said, 'Call them; for a repentance from better to worse is a change we cannot make. But it is a noble thing to turn from wickedness to righteousness.' But he again said to him, 'If thou despisest the wild beasts, I will cause thee to be consumed by fire unless thou repent.' But Polycarp said, 'Thou threatenest a fire that burneth for an hour, and after a little is quenched; for thou knowest not of the fire of future judgment and of eternal punishment which is reserved for the impious. But why dost thou delay? Do what thou wilt.' Saying these and other words besides, he was filled with courage and joy, and his face was suffused with grace, so that not only was he not terrified and dismayed by the words that were spoken to him, but, on the contrary, the proconsul was amazed, and sent his herald to proclaim three times in the stadium: 'Polycarp hath confessed that he is a Christian.' And when this was proclaimed by the herald, the whole multitude, both of Gentiles and of Jews, who dwelt in Smyrna, cried out with ungovernable wrath and with a great shout, 'This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the overthrower of our gods, who teacheth many not to sacrifice nor to worship.' When they had

said this, they cried out and asked the Asiarch Philip to let a lion loose upon Polycarp. But he said that it was not lawful to him, since he had closed the games. They thought fit to cry out with one accord that Polycarp should be burned alive. . . . . .

"Forthwith then the materials prepared for the pile were placed about him; and as they were also about to nail him to the stake, he said, 'Leave me thus; for he that hath given me the strength to endure the fire will also grant me the strength to remain in the fire unmoved without being secured by you with nails.' So they did not nail him, but bound him. And he, with his hands behind him and bound as a noble ram from a great flock, an acceptable burnt-offering unto God omnipotent, said, 'Father of thy beloved and blessed son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the knowledge of thee, the God of angels and powers and of the whole creation and of the entire race of the righteous who live in thy presence, I bless thee that thou hast deemed me worthy of this day and hour, that I might receive a portion in the number of the martyrs, in the cup of Christ, unto resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, in the immortality of the Holy Spirit. Among these may I be received before thee this day, in a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as thou,

the faithful and true God, hast beforehand prepared and revealed and hast fulfilled. Wherefore I praise thee for everything; I bless thee, I glorify thee, through the eternal high priest, Jesus Christ, thy beloved son, through whom, with him, in the Holy Spirit, be glory unto thee, both now and for the ages to come, Amen.' When he had offered up his Amen and had finished his prayer, the firemen lighted the fire; and as a great flame blazed out, we, to whom it was given to see, saw a wonder, and we were preserved that we might relate to the others what happened. For the fire presented the appearance of a vault, like the sail of a vessel filled with the wind, and made a wall about the body of the martyr, and it was in the midst not like flesh burning, but like gold and silver refined in a furnace. . . . So at length the lawless men, when they saw that the body could not be consumed by fire, commanded an executioner to approach and pierce him with a sword. And when he had done this, there came forth a quantity of blood so that it extinguished the fire; and the whole crowd marveled that there should be such a difference between the unbelievers and the elect, of whom this man also was one, the most wonderful teacher of our times, apostolic and prophetic, who was bishop of the catholic Church in Smyrna."

CHAPTER XIII

THE MARTYRDOMS: SANCTUS AND BLANDINA

The Martyrs of Lyons.

In order to gain still another impression of the heroic age of the Christian religion, let us read one more narrative of martyrdom. It is taken from the same historian, Eusebius, who quotes it from a letter written by the Christians in Lyons and Vienne to their brethren in Asia and Phrygia.

"The servants of Christ residing at Vienne and Lyons in Gaul, to the brethren throughout Asia and Phrygia, who hold the same faith and hope of redemption, peace and grace and glory from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

Then, having related some other matters, they begin their account in this manner:

"The greatness of the tribulation in this region, and the fury of the heathen against the saints, and the sufferings of the blessed witnesses, we cannot recount accurately, nor indeed could they possibly be recorded. For with all his

might the adversary fell upon us, giving us a foretaste of his unbridled activity at his future coming. He endeavored in every manner to practice and exercise his servants in baths and markets, but forbidding any of us to be seen in any place whatever. But the grace of God led the conflict against him, and delivered the weak and set them as firm pillars, able through patience to withstand all the wrath of the Evil One. And they joined battle with him, undergoing all kinds of shame and injury; and, regarding their great sufferings as little, they hastened to Christ manifesting truly that 'the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to us-ward.' First of all they endured nobly the injuries heaped upon them by the populace: clamors and blows and draggings and robberies and stonings and imprisonments, and all things which an infuriated mob delights in inflicting on enemies and adversaries. Then being taken to the forum by the chiliarch and the authorities of the city, they were examined in the presence of the whole multitude and having confessed, they were imprisoned until the arrival of the governor. . . . . .

"But the whole wrath of the populace and governor and soldiers was aroused exceedingly against Sanctus, the deacon from Vienne, and

Maturus, a late convert, yet a noble combatant, and against Attalus, a native of Pergamos, where he had always been a pillar and foundation, and Blandina, through whom Christ showed that things which appear mean and obscure and despicable to men are with God of great glory, through love toward him manifested in power, and not boasting in appearance. For while we all trembled, and her earthly mistress, who was herself also one of the witnesses, feared that on account of the weakness of her body she would be unable to make bold confession, Blandina was filled with such power as to be delivered and raised above those who were torturing her by turns from morning till evening in every manner, so that they acknowledged that they were conquered, and could do nothing more to her. And they were astonished at her endurance, as her entire body was mangled and broken; and they testified that one of these forms of torture was sufficient to destroy life, not to speak of so many and so great sufferings. But the blessed woman, like a noble athlete, renewed her strength in her confession; and her comfort and recreation and relief from the pain of her sufferings was in exclaiming, 'I am a Christian, and there is nothing vile done by us.'

"But Sanctus also endured marvelously and superhumanly all the outrages which he suffered.

While the wicked men hoped by the continuance and severity of his tortures to wring something from him which he ought not to say, he girded himself against them with such firmness that he would not even tell his name, or the nation or city to which he belonged, or whether he was bond or free, but answered in the Roman tongue to all their questions, 'I am a Christian.' He confessed this instead of name and city and race and everything besides, and the people heard from him no other words. There arose therefore on the part of the governor and his tormentors a great desire to conquer him." There follows an account of the tortures heaped upon Sanctus, and the writer continues: "Christ, suffering in him, manifested his glory, delivering him from his adversary and making him an example for the others, showing that nothing is fearful where the love of the Father is, and nothing painful where there is the glory of Christ. For when the wicked men tortured him again after some days, supposing that with his body swollen and inflamed to such a degree that he could not bear the touch of a hand, if they should again apply the same instruments they would overcome him, or at least by his death under his sufferings others would be made afraid, not only did not this occur, but, contrary to all human expectation, his body arose and

stood erect in the midst of the subsequent torments, and resumed its original appearance and the use of the limbs, so that, through the grace of Christ, these second torments became to him not torture, but healing. . . . . .

"The blessed Pothinus, who had been entrusted with the bishopric of Lyons, was dragged to the judgment seat. He was more than ninety years of age, and very infirm, scarcely indeed able to breathe because of physical weakness; but he was strengthened with spiritual zeal through his earnest desire for martyrdom. Though his body was worn out by old age and disease, his life was preserved that Christ might triumph in it. When he was brought by the soldiers to the tribunal, accompanied by the civil magistrates and a multitude who shouted against him in every manner as if he were Christ himself, he bore noble witness. Being asked by the governor, Who was the God of the Christians, he replied, 'If thou art worthy, thou shalt know.' Then he was dragged away harshly and received blows of every kind. Those near him struck him with their hands and feet, regardless of his age; and those at a distance hurled at him anything that they could seize; all of them thinking that they would be guilty of great wickedness and impiety if any abuse should be omitted. For thus they thought to avenge

their own deities. Scarcely able to breathe, he was flung into prison and died after two days.

"Maturus, Sanctus and Attalus being again brought into the forum and subjected to the tortures of the wild beasts and to being roasted in an iron chair, finally were sacrificed by the fury of the populace because they would not deny their Christian faith.

"But Blandina was suspended on a stake and exposed to be devoured by the wild beasts who should attack her. And because she appeared as if hanging on a cross, and because of her earnest prayers, she inspired the combatants with great zeal. For they looked on her in her conflict, and beheld with their outward eyes in the form of their sister, him who was crucified for them, that he might persuade those that believe on him, that every one that suffers for the glory of Christ has fellowship with the living God. As none of the wild beasts at that time touched her, she was taken down from the stake and again cast into prison. She was preserved thus for another contest, that, being victorious in more conflicts, she might make the punishment of the crooked serpent irrevocable; and, though small and weak and despised, yet clothed with Christ the mighty and conquering Athlete, she might arouse the zeal of the brethren, and, having overcome the adversary many times, might

receive, through her conflict, the crown incorruptible. . . . . .

"After all these, on the last day of the contests, Blandina was again brought in, with a boy, Ponticus, about fifteen years old. They had been brought every day to witness the sufferings of the others, and had been pressed to swear by the idols. But because they remained steadfast and despised them, the multitude became furious, so that they had no compassion for the youth of the boy nor respect for the sex of the woman. Therefore they exposed them to all the terrible sufferings and took them through the entire round of torture, repeatedly urging them to swear, but being unable to effect this; for Ponticus, encouraged by his sister so that even the heathen could see that she was confirming and strengthening him, having nobly endured every torture, gave up the ghost. But the blessed Blandina, last of all, having as a noble mother encouraged her children and sent them before her victorious to the King, endured herself all their conflicts and hastened after them, glad and rejoicing in her departure as if called to a marriage supper, rather than cast to wild beasts. And, after the scourging, after the wild beasts, after the roasting seat, she was finally enclosed in a net and thrown before a bull. And having been tossed about by the

animal, but feeling none of the things that were happening to her, on account of her hope and firm hold upon what had been entrusted to her, and her communion with Christ, she also was sacrificed. And the heathen themselves confessed that never among them had a woman endured so many and so terrible tortures."

CHAPTER XIV

CHRISTIANITY THE RELIGION OF THE EMPIRE

1. *The Apologists for Christianity.*

DURING the terrible time of persecution the religion of Christ was neither silent nor stagnant. Confronted with the supreme test of suffering and death Christians were all the more ardent to defend their faith against false charges, and the more eager to convert their pagan neighbors to the way of salvation. Danger invigorated the Christian congregations, deepened their convictions, and inflamed their zeal.

One of the most remarkable forms of this energetic activity was in the writings by which learned Christians denounced the cruelty of the persecutions, and defended their religion against heathen accusation. Thus about the middle of the second century, Justin, a philosopher born in Samaria, who had become a Christian, addressed an "Apology," or defense of Christianity, to the Emperor Antoninus Pius. Soon afterward he wrote a second apology addressed to the Roman Senate. Fifty years or so later one

of the greatest men of the early church, Tertullian, a native of the Roman province of North Africa, wrote an Apology to the "rulers of the Roman Empire." "One thing," says this powerful and at times defiant book, "truth asks of earthly rulers — not to be condemned unknown." He goes on: "The outcry is that the state is filled with Christians; that they are in the fields, in the fortresses, in the islands. Our enemies lament, as for a calamity, that people of both sexes, of every age and station, even persons of high rank, are becoming converts to the Christian faith." Then comes this splendid assertion: "We Christians are but of yesterday, but we are everywhere in your empire; in cities, in islands, in forts, in free towns, in market places, in armed camps, in clubs, in the palace, in the Senate, in the forum. To you we have left only the temples of idolatry."

From this same virile writer let us quote the following to show in what spirit the Christians of that day faced death for their principles: "We are not greatly troubled or alarmed at the persecutions that we suffer from ignorant men. We have joined the Christian body, accepting the terms of its covenant, as men whose very lives are not their own. Our religion commands us to love our enemies, and to pray for those that persecute us. All men love those that love

them; only Christians love those that hate them. Your cruelty is our glory."

Finally we must mention among these apologists the name of the greatest scholar in the early church, Origen of Alexandria, who wrote an enormous number of works.[1] His most

[1] ORIGEN was born of Christian parents in 185 or 186 at Alexandria. His father, Leonidas, died a martyr. Inspired by this heroic memory, Origen at the age of eighteen began instructing pagans in the Christian faith. What time was left him after these apostolic labors he spent in study. He went deep into philosophy, and learned Hebrew, though imperfectly, and became the foremost scholar of the early church. Having had difficulty with his own bishop of Alexandria, he opened a school in the Palestinian city of Caesarea, offering courses in Greek philosophy and literature, morals, and the Scriptures. His fame grew throughout all Christendom as an interpreter of the Bible, as an apologist for Christianity against the pagans, and as a theologian. His industry produced an almost incredible number of works, many of which have been lost. The two greatest works that have come down to us are the four books on "Principles," and the eight books against the pagan philosopher, Celsus. Origen's name is likewise to be forever associated with his labors to produce a pure Greek text of the Old Testament. Origen suffered in the Decian persecution, but his death seems to have occurred some time later, perhaps in 254.

Origen has not a reputation for sound orthodoxy. His teaching that the Son is subordinated to the Father, and certain views of his concerning the final salvation of the souls and demons in hell have tarnished, or glorified, his name with the imputation of heresy.

famous defense of his religion, however, is his book, "Against Celsus," this Celsus being a philosopher who had written sharply and scornfully against the Christians.

It is clear then that shame and slander and suffering did not break the spirit of the Christians, but rather elevated and inspired it. Clear too is it that Christianity was extending rapidly throughout the Empire just as these measures were taken to exterminate it. From Egypt to Spain, from Palestine to England the name of Jesus was spoken by believers before the year 300. With such vitality it was only a question of time before the central stronghold of paganism, the Roman Emperorship, should be won, and Christians should see on the throne of the Caesars not a persecutor, but a believer.

2. *Constantine.*

This momentous event occurred early in the fourth century, when Christianity was still prostrated from the terrible persecution of Diocletian. Constantine, son of Constantius and Helena, succeeded to his father's office as emperor of the western part of the Empire in 306. In 312 he overthrew Maxentius, one of his rivals, and entered Rome in triumph. Constantine at this time was very well disposed to Christianity. His mother had been a Christian, and it is probable

that as a sharp-sighted student of affairs he perceived the falsehood and foresaw the doom of idolatry and recognized the moral and intellectual superiority of Christianity. Later in his career he became the protector of the Christian religion, the friend and confidant of Christian bishops; and on occasion he could use the language of a faithful and even pious believer. It is true that Constantine was not baptized until his death-bed. He retained, as did many Christian emperors after him, the old pagan title of Supreme Pontiff; and he probably was addicted to certain of the old heathen superstitions. But the fact remains that he was in sympathy, and doubtless became in belief, a Christian, and as the first Christian Roman Emperor he holds an immortal place in history.

3. *The Legend of Constantine's Vision.*

A famous story of Constantine says that just before the battle of the Milvian Bridge, in which he overcame Maxentius, he had a vision of a cross that shone in the sky with the inscription, "In hoc signo vinces," which becomes in English, "In this sign thou shalt conquer." It is a beautiful legend which has touched the hearts of many Christian ages; but we are not to regard it as historical. Apart from its inherent improbability, we discover that the oldest historical

documents which narrate the incident differ quite hopelessly. Eusebius says that Constantine and his whole army saw the miraculous sign in the afternoon while the sun was shining. Later in sleep Constantine had a vision of Christ who interpreted the portent and promised victory. It makes us suspicious that Eusebius, writing of the battle in his history in 326 says not a word of the vision; but has the account we have just mentioned in his "Life of Constantine" written in 337 after Constantine's death.

Lactantius, who was tutor to Constantine's son, Crispus, gives us the oldest reference we have. He says that just before the battle Constantine was told in a dream to have a cross inscribed on the shields of the soldiers. Not a word has Lactantius of any vision in the sky or of the inscription, "In this sign, conquer." Our third ancient authority, Nazarius, who gave the oration on Constantine's tenth year of rule, says that Constantine's army saw in the sky heavenly armies with dazzling shields.

When in addition to these contradictions in the evidence, we recall that similar stories had long been known to pagan Rome, we shall hardly need further proof of the legendary character of the tradition. The demigods Castor and Pollux had been seen fighting against Hannibal. Julius Caesar had seen Venus taking sides with him

against Pompey; and Caesar's soldiers had beheld heavenly armies in the sky and heard the clashing of their shields the night before the battle of Pharsalia. Of precisely the same character is the story of the vision of Constantine.

4. *His Character Not Notably Christian.*

Though a Christian, Constantine is far from a model of conduct or character. Not to speak of other acts of cruel vengeance, for which there may have been mitigating circumstances, he put to death his sister's son, Licinianus, a mere youth; and had his own son, Crispus, murdered. These are dark stains on his character which must remain despite every attempt at excusing them. A lesser fault, but an unmanly one, is told us by his devoted biographer, the church historian, Eusebius. Eusebius says that Constantine, anticipating death and burial, had twelve coffins set up in a church, representing the twelve apostles, and a thirteenth coffin, which was to be his own, placed in the midst of them, as if he were a thirteenth apostle. Indeed he regarded himself as a kind of lay bishop and often acted in the spirit of a foolish conceit. He considered that the church and church questions, even theological problems, were as much committed to his imperial care and supervision as the Empire itself.

5. *The Edict of Milan.*

But whatever the evil in Constantine's character, as the first Christian emperor he marks the beginning of a new day for Christianity. Already in 313, before he was sole emperor but still sharing the imperial power with Licinius and Maximin, he issued jointly with Licinius the famous decree of religious toleration called the "Edict of Milan." This is one of the greatest documents in history. It is the first announcement by the rulers of any state of complete freedom of conscience. If the churches of Christianity had only lived up to this splendid charter of liberty, their history would have been nobler than it is. Sorrowfully we must confess that they did not live up to it. But of this we shall see more later. Let us conclude this chapter by quoting several of the noble sentences of the Edict, sentences which definitely declare that the era of cruel persecution is at an end, and that Christianity stands on an equal footing of freedom with every other religion of the Empire.

"When I, Constantine Augustus, and I, Licinius Augustus, came under happy auspices to Milan and deliberated upon the common welfare and prosperity, we determined first to issue such decrees as seemed for the benefit of all the people. . . . We resolved to grant to both Chris-

tians and to all other persons freedom to follow the religion of their choice. . . . We have then ordered that no one is to be denied the liberty to choose and follow the religion of the Christians; and that every man be free to devote his mind to the religion that he deems best for him. . . .

"We have granted to Christians full freedom to practice their religion. Since this favor has been freely given them by us, they will understand that a like freedom is allowed to others to follow different observances; it being clearly in accord with the peace that now prevails that each one should enjoy the liberty of choosing and worshiping the deity that he pleases."

PART II

HOW ORTHODOXY DEVELOPED

CHAPTER XV

THE BEGINNINGS OF DOGMA

1. *The Further from Jesus, the More Dogmas.*

As Christianity grew further and further from the days of its Lord and Founder, it added to the original Gospel ideas, beliefs and dogmas for which there is little or no warrant in the words of Jesus. Jesus preached a holy life in preparation for the kingdom of God. That was his Gospel. Love God; love your neighbor; be poor in spirit, and pure in heart; be merciful and longsuffering; work and strive for righteousness; repent of your own sins and forgive the sins committed against you. Do this in preparation for the blessed kingdom. This in brief is the teaching and preaching of Jesus. His gift to the world is spiritual enthusiasm, moral earnestness, and communion with God; not dogmas nor creeds. His chief emphasis is on what we may be with God's help and indwelling, not on what he was himself.

But dogmas and creeds came and came soon. We are now to see how they came and what

changes they introduced into the simplicity of the Gospel. But first let us keep two points in mind in order to be just and fair. The first is this: it is entirely proper, it is even good, that philosophers and theologians should study the principles of Christianity, should state them in learned language, and should speculate concerning them. It is this study and this speculation that make up the science of theology, a science which we must not scorn, but honor. Our protest as liberal Christians is not against the high speculations of theology, but only against the attempt to make them a part of divine and unchanging truth; against setting them up as necessary for salvation; and against calling people heretics who cannot conscientiously believe them.

Our second point is that whatever additions to the original simple Gospel were made by the Christian churches, these churches still kept an ardent devotion to Jesus. Though they might surround Jesus with dogmas of which he never dreamed, yet they clung to his blessed memory, preached his incomparable life, and in his name produced mighty works of holiness. When therefore we study, as we are now going to study, one or two of the dogmas which have unjustifiably been made part of the very substance of the Christian religion, we shall remember that if we

are obliged to utter the words "This dogma is not true!" we still gladly add these words: "But the church that declared the dogma kept alive a thing greater than a score of dogmas, the sanctifying word and influence of Jesus!"

2. *Devil-Doctrine a World-Wide Belief.*

As an example of the dogmatizing spirit and of the excesses of which theology and mere speculation may be capable, let us examine the belief of the early Christians in demons or devils. Belief in evil spirits is one of the oldest beliefs of the human race. Whenever any misfortune happened — the failure of crops, the drying up of streams, hurricanes, famines, defeats in war, pain, sickness, or death — rude men of primitive times, long before Christianity, interpreted it as caused by wicked spirits. And whenever they fancied that these devils were near them or within them, they devised means of driving them away. Thus if a man had a toothache, a devil or many devils were thought to be inside the man's head, causing all the misery. In such a case, a man expert in driving away devils was called in as we call in a doctor. This person, to whom the name of exorcist (that is, devil-expeller) was given, would recite charms and incantations, and profess by this means to chase away the imps. The old Egyptians held such beliefs; so

did the Babylonians, and so did many other primitive peoples.

3. *The Moderation of Jesus.*

Now it is both astonishing and painful to observe how constantly this ancient and weird superstition appears in the beliefs and customs of early Christianity. Indeed it appears in the Gospels themselves. We are told there that Jesus frequently expelled devils from the bodies of the sick. It is even said in one Gospel-narrative that Jesus drove devils into a herd of swine. Again it is narrated that he drove seven devils out of one woman. Some of these devil-expulsions related of Jesus, we may be sure, are later legendary additions to his authentic history. But it need not astonish us if Jesus accepted the belief of his time that devils sometimes dwelt in human beings and caused such diseases as epilepsy, insanity, and paralysis. The point to remember is that Jesus did not make any doctrine concerning devils of primary importance in his teaching. He says comparatively little about devils; he creates no terror in people by warning them of the presence of devils; he does not pretend that the world is full of them or that we need expert exorcists to drive them away.

4. *No Such Moderation in Early Christianity.*

But it is no exaggeration to declare that in early Christianity devil-doctrine is everywhere. The world is said to be swarming with evil spirits; and from our cradle onward we are surrounded with them. Origen teaches that "the demons who are scattered, as it were in troops in different parts of the world, have chosen for themselves a leader under whom they proceed to pillage the souls of men." Devils were thought to inhabit the statues of the gods, and to swarm in the temples. They flew through the air; they caused nightmares; they crept into human bodies and caused disease.

In a world thus, in their belief, alive with devils, a considerable portion of the religion of the early Christians consisted perhaps naturally enough in protective measures against these imps let loose. Accordingly we find the Christian church of that time constantly using exorcism, that is, devil-expulsion, and setting up a special order of men for this purpose, the order of exorcists, precisely as the old Egyptian and Babylonian religions had done. One of the most frequent assertions that we meet in the writings of early Christianity is the proud boast of the power of Christians to expel devils from the unfortunates possessed by them. These Christian

writers taunt the pagans and even the Jews with powerlessness over devils, "But we Christians drive them out when your utmost efforts have failed." Justin, the apologist whom we mentioned in an earlier chapter, says that Jewish exorcists cannot expel a single devil from a possessed person though they invoke their kings, their patriarchs, and their prophets. But a simple Christian, adds Justin, flings forth the devils in confusion by merely uttering the name of Jesus.

Listen to this same Justin to see to what an appalling extent this devil-superstition could go: "The Son of God became man for the destruction of devils. You may know this from what has happened before your eyes. For many of us Christians have healed a great number of the possessed in the whole world and in this city [Rome] by exorcism in the name of Jesus Christ; whereas these possessed could not be healed by all other exorcists or magicians." Here we have it stated that the very purpose of the life and work of Jesus was to fight with devils! Shocking as this statement is to us, it was entirely acceptable to that age. Believing in omnipresent evil spirits the people then were all anxiety to be guarded from them. And, unpleasant as the fact is, we may be entirely sure that many persons were converted to Christianity because of the

high reputation the Christians enjoyed as expellers of devils. Just what were the cures which were thus confidently claimed is of no great importance. Most of them doubtless were cases of hysteria, which often yield to a soothing or authoritative word.

5. *The Worst Excess of All.*

But the most terrible excess of this devil-dogma came with the blasphemous belief that even infants, whether born of Christian parents or not, are possessed of devils until they receive the exorcism which precedes baptism. In this belief, which the Christian church held for centuries and certain branches of the Christian church hold to-day, we may see what may become of dogma when not restrained by a high moral sense and by a true understanding of the inner spirit of Jesus.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GOSPEL TEACHING ABOUT JESUS

1. *Our Right to Study and Criticize Dogmas.*

THE last chapter has shown us how far from the spirit of Jesus a belief of Christians can go. What we saw there of the growth of the doctrine of evil spirits is enough to put us on our guard when a dogma or a creed of later times is said to be based upon the words of Jesus. Perhaps it is so based, but before we consent to it, we are resolved to examine it. For we have seen Christian churches declaring that unclean demons dwell in an innocent infant. And we know that this cannot be true since the Creator of children is a good God, not an evil one; and we know that Jesus who loved little children and blessed them, and said, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," would have been horrified at such a thought.

So as we are now to study the growth of the dogma of the Trinity, we are simply doing a reasonable act in asking for the proofs of it; in inquiring whether Jesus gives support to it; and in tracing the steps by which from a great uncertainty it came to be declared unto Christians as a divine truth. Is it a divine truth? Or is

it, like the dogma concerning devils, to be regarded as an unfortunate addition to the simplicity of the true Gospel, an addition which neither the word nor the spirit of Jesus warrants? We know what sort of teacher Jesus was. We know what the true and eternal heart of religion is. By these standards, with the help of history, we are to judge this doctrine and all doctrines.

2. *What is the Trinity Doctrine?*

The doctrine of the Trinity declares that our Heavenly Father is God, that the Son who became man as Jesus of Nazareth is God, that the Holy Ghost is God; and that these three distinct divine persons are one God. While they are separate as three Persons they are one as possessing the same divine nature. According to the doctrine Jesus of Nazareth is eternal, infinite God equally with the Father. Our present question is: how this view of Jesus came to prevail? All other questions that we well might raise regarding the Trinity belief are outside our purpose just now.

3. *What did Jesus Teach concerning Himself?*

The oldest witnesses for the life and words of Jesus are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and

Luke. The fourth Gospel, called "of John" is later than these three and will be considered separately. Our first question then will be directed to our oldest sources for the life of Jesus: — In the first three Gospels does Jesus ever say that he is God the Almighty and Infinite? And the answer is, Not once. Does he ever say that he is the Creator of the world? Never in the slightest hint. It is the Father, he says, who causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall, who feeds the birds and decks the lilies. Does he ever ask the people to worship him as the Infinite? Never. Jesus said a good deal concerning himself and his work. If then he omitted every word or phrase which would identify him with Deity, we can make but one inference: namely, that such an idea never entered his mind. He certainly would not have spoken explicitly of minor aspects of his person and mission, and neglected or forgotten to utter the infinitely greater assertion of his Deity, if Deity lay within his power to claim. But the three early Gospels enable us to go further. They contain sayings of Jesus in which he expressly sets himself in a different sphere from Deity. Thus, speaking of the day of judgment Jesus says, "of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." (Matthew 24: 36)

A more definite statement that the knowledge of Jesus was not infinite, but finite, and that he was subordinate to the Father could hardly be made.

Again Jesus said, "Every one who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven." (Luke 12: 10) In these words Jesus puts an immeasurable difference between an insult to himself and an insult to God's Holy Spirit. Words would cease to mean anything, they would become cunning delusions to our intelligence, if Jesus said this knowing all the while that he was perfectly equal to God's Holy Spirit, and that in consequence there could not possibly be any moral difference between an insult to him and an insult to God's Spirit.

One more text let us quote. "And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, even God." (Luke 18: 18, 19) Here Jesus goes out of his way, as it were, to state the infinite distance between himself and God. So mighty is God, so gracious and beneficent, that in the highest sense the word "good" can apply to him alone. Feeling this, Jesus refuses to permit the harmless word to be addressed to himself.

Let us ask this one question. If Jesus was so eager, almost so jealous, to give all praise, all honor to the great God, our Father, that he would not even let himself be called "good," what would he have done had men fallen down to worship him, and had given him the adoration due to the Infinite? There can be only one answer. Jesus would have shrunk back in horror. He would have blazed forth in indignation. His soul would have been sickened as at a blasphemy. He, the meek servant of the Most Holy, he, the obedient messenger of God's will, to thrust himself into the place of Deity, and take the worship he asked for the Father! If anything in history is impossible, this is impossible. Jesus served a Higher. He announced a Higher. He lifted men up to love and trust a Higher. That humble heart served not its own will, but sought only God's.

4. *The Claims of Jesus and His General Attitude.*

Jesus certainly did believe that he was a special messenger of God, and that he stood in a relation of peculiar and unique nearness to God. Toward the end of his ministry he came to believe that he was Messiah, the Promised One, commissioned to lead men not into a kingdom of earthly splendor, but into the kingdom of

God. Occupying this position and bearing this responsibility, he spoke at times words that only one conscious of the vocation of the Holy Spirit would dare to speak. For instance: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight. All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth who the Son is save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." (Luke 10: 21, 22) There is grave doubt whether the latter part of this saying is correctly reported in the Gospel text. But passing over that point, we note that while the words represent Jesus as intimately in communion with God and unique as a revealer of God, the context still shows him as prostrate in spirit before the Lord of heaven and earth and grateful to the Father for revealing the divine will.

In the height of his claim to be sent of God, Jesus is always and unfailingly the humble worshiper of the Most High. He said that he sought not his own will, but his meat and drink was to do the will of God who sent him. He suffered not only hunger and thirst, but disappointment and desolation. He prayed to God

that, if possible, the cup of pain and death might pass from him; "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." He could be severe; he could be indignant; he could have a broken heart. On the cross he cried, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In all this Jesus is like us, man, yet the first of men; a suffering martyr, yet the chief of martyrs.

But if in defiance of his own words, in outrage to his own soul, we say that he was Infinite Deity all the time, then his life becomes as it were a pantomime. Are we to think that when he prayed he did not need to pray, being himself Infinite God? that when he suffered he really was all the while enjoying infinite happiness as the Eternal must? that when he cried, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he did not mean it; for how can God be forsaken by God? To think thus of the life of Jesus is to make a puzzle of it; to give it double meaning; to take away all its power to inspire us. It is not possible to do this. That sweet, strong, candid spirit never indulged in make-believe. He was what he claimed to be: a servant of God, a humble child of the Eternal who followed God's call and nobly died in obeying it.

CHAPTER XVII

THE APOSTOLIC TEACHING

1. *What the First Apostolic Preachers Thought of Jesus.*

WE have unusually abundant material upon this subject. In the second and third chapters of the Acts of the Apostles are speeches of Peter which contain the earliest doctrine that we have concerning Jesus. These sermons of the leader of the apostolic band were spoken many years before the Gospels were written and furnish us a priceless testimony of the belief that his first followers and oldest missionaries held concerning Jesus. What does Peter say of Jesus? First and foremost that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Jesus was first preached to the world as Messiah. The Old Testament was searched and re-searched for arguments to prove to the Jews that the ancient promises were fulfilled in Jesus. The greatest claim made for Jesus by his apostolic preachers was that he was the expected Christ.

Now if Jesus were the infinite God, would he be preached as Messiah? Messiah was to be only king of the Jews, not God. Would the

apostles deliberately ignore the awful assertion of the Deity of Jesus, and place all their emphasis on the comparatively trivial Messiahship? This is inconceivable. Peter preached Jesus as Messiah simply because it never entered his mind that Jesus was the Eternal. His language throughout proves this. Thus: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you." "This Jesus did God raise up." "The God of our fathers has glorified his Servant Jesus." And the prayer of the disciples in the fourth chapter: "Thy holy Servant Jesus whom thou didst anoint." "Grant unto thy servants that signs and wonders may be done through the name of thy holy Servant Jesus."

2. *The Gospel of John.*

An entirely new manner of speaking of Jesus is found in the fourth Gospel, to which the name of the apostle John is usually, though inaccurately, applied. In this late Gospel, not written until seventy years after the death of Jesus, we have Jesus called the "Word of God." According to this Gospel, the "Word" existed with God "from the beginning." The "Word was God." And in the course of time the "Word" came down from heaven and took flesh as Jesus of Nazareth.

Where did this strange term for Jesus come

from? He never spoke of himself as the Word. The writer of the fourth Gospel then got the term not from Jesus, but from some other source. What other source? The answer is, pagan philosophy. Plato in the fourth century before Christ thought that there was a divinity intermediate between God and men — a world-soul begotten of God. Later philosophers, the Stoics, took this intermediate divinity and called it the divine Word. The Word, they said, is the divine reason working in the world and creating order and beauty. And finally this same idea was adopted by a Jewish philosopher, named Philo of Alexandria, by whom the author of John's Gospel seems to have been particularly influenced. Listen to some of the extraordinary phrases used by Philo concerning the Word: "The Word comes forth from God as a second God"; "The Word is the first-born of God"; "The Word stands between God and men"; "The Word bestows eternal life"; "The Word is the means of propitiation"; "The Word is the Way, the Pilot of men."

The "Word" then as a divine or semi-divine being intermediate between God and mankind is not a Christian idea at all. When, therefore, the fourth Gospel borrows this term from a pre-Christian philosophy and applies it to Jesus, we may admire it as a brilliant effort to express

Jesus in philosophical language; but we cannot accept it literally, as it is a manner of speaking wholly unknown to Jesus and his first disciples.

3. *Paul's Teaching concerning Jesus.*

Paul, without using the term "Word," teaches, as John does, that Jesus had a preëxistence with God in heaven before coming on earth to be incarnated in human form. He is in the "form" of God. He is a celestial being. He is enthroned with God as our mediator and intercessor. Paul never in unmistakable terms called Jesus God. Indeed, he quite clearly expresses a difference between the heavenly Christ and the very Infinite. Thus: "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of every woman is man; and the head of Christ is God." (I. Cor. 11: 3) Again: "All are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (I. Cor. 3: 22, 23) And this: "When all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all." (I. Cor. 15: 28)

Paul and John then seem to give a certain divineness to Jesus. They attribute to him a celestial nature and a preëxistence in heaven. But they seem at the same time to imply that the Son is subordinate to the Infinite Eternal.

4. *Does the Trinity-Formula Occur in the New Testament?*

Are there texts in the New Testament which directly express the Trinity by putting the three persons together, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? If the Trinity is a genuine element in the Christian faith, and if it was taught by Jesus, we should expect to find several such texts. We should further expect that the texts thus proclaiming what is called a fundamental truth should be authentic and sure beyond any likelihood of doubt. What we find, however, is not that at all. There is only one text in the New Testament which contains the Trinitarian formula, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There used to be two; but the second, namely in the first epistle of John, chapter the fifth, verse seventh: "there are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one," is recognized by all the competent scholars of the world to be a spurious verse, not belonging to the text, and added to it only in the fourth century. So clearly false and interpolated is the verse that the orthodox revisers of the King James English Bible themselves omit it.

The one Trinity-text left is the nineteenth verse of the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." These words are said to have been spoken by Jesus in one of his apparitions after his resurrection. No words of the entire Gospel are more open to doubt. And in the second place, this text is repeatedly quoted by early Christian writers like Eusebius and Origen, without the Trinitarian addition; that is, it ends thus: "teaching them to observe whatever I have commanded you." It seems certain that Eusebius and Origen had before them copies of the New Testament which did not contain the Trinity-formula. Only thus can we account for their omission of it when they quoted the remainder of that very verse.

Moreover we know from the Acts of the Apostles that the early method of conferring baptism was not in the name of the Trinity, but in the name of Jesus only. If those early Christians knew that it was an express command of Jesus that they should baptize in the name of the Trinity, how could they directly disobey it by baptizing in a different way? They did not use the Trinity-formula in baptizing because they did not recognize it as imposed by Jesus, and probably for a generation knew nothing of it whatever.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GRAECO-ROMAN INFLUENCE

1. *The Two New Testament Views of Jesus.*

By the time that the New Testament documents were composed we have seen that two views were held regarding Jesus. The older belief, put forward explicitly in Peter's speeches in the Book of Acts, was that Jesus was simply Messiah, the promised Christ of Jewish expectation. As such he was a human being called by God to the Messianic office and sanctified as "God's holy Servant" for this vocation. The second and later opinion, held by Paul and the author of the fourth Gospel, was that Jesus preexisted in heaven as a celestial being or "Word" before taking flesh as the son of Mary. Jesus in this view is not merely a human being lifted up and inspired by God for a great mission. He is a divine or quasi-divine visitant on this earth, having come from heaven, his true home, and taken the nature of man to save us. As we have already remarked, however, it seems certain that John and Paul while attributing divineness

to Jesus did make a real distinction between him and the Supreme Deity, and subordinated him to the Father.

2. *The Gospel Had to De-Hebraize Itself.*

As Christianity spread beyond Jewish circles and took in multitudes of Greeks and Romans, the belief concerning Jesus was bound to undergo a still further change. These Gentile converts, unacquainted with Jewish religion, were not much interested in hearing that Jesus was the Messiah, the Messiahship being a purely Jewish dignity. Jesus had to be preached to these Gentiles in new terms and with a different emphasis. They did not care to embrace a religion that spoke practically the same speech as Judaism; nor to follow a Lord whose chief claim was that as a Jew he had fulfilled the Jewish Scriptures. If the Gospel was to win the Graeco-Romans, it was absolutely necessary for it to use other than Jewish modes of thought and expression, and to fit itself to language and ideas familiar to Graeco-Romans.

This is what we mean by the heading of this section, "The Gospel Had to De-Hebraize Itself." The new religion was obliged to go beyond Palestine to Antioch, to Athens, to Rome. Hence it was under the necessity of announcing its message in terms which might have been dis-

trusted in Palestine, but were the everyday terms of Antioch, Athens, and Rome.

3. *The New Testament Itself Shows this Change.*

When the fourth Gospel calls Jesus the "Word" it de-Hebraizes the teaching concerning him. The "Word," as we have seen, was a strictly philosophical term familiar to pagan thinkers in Greece and Rome. Here, then, before our eyes is an effort to adapt the Gospel to Gentile minds by expressing it in the language of the Gentile world.

4. *Divine Men Familiar to Graeco-Romans.*

Now when the discussions arose respecting the nature of Jesus, whether he was absolutely divine or only in an inferior sense divine, the Graeco-Roman Christians were particularly ready and prompt with a solution. Just as the Graeco-Roman influence had caused the term "Word" to be applied to Jesus, so was this influence going to be brought to bear on the answer to the question: "In what sense is Jesus divine?" Let us explain how.

The Greeks and Romans had long been accustomed to express their veneration for great men by giving them divine honors, by building altars to them, by considering them gods. In

the fourth century before Christ Alexander the Great had conquered nearly all the known world. He had spread Greek civilization from Asia Minor to India, from the Caspian Sea to Egypt. Believing that so mighty a man must be divine, Greeks and Egyptians built temples in his honor after his death, and formally enrolled him among the gods. Ptolemy, Alexander's general who became King of Egypt, was, along with his wife Bernice, also numbered among the gods. The son of this Ptolemy went a step further and had himself worshiped as a god during his lifetime. He assumed the titles, "God" and "Savior." These two terms later were applied to several men. Julius Caesar was dignified as "God" and "Savior" after his victory over Pompey at Pharsalia. Augustus, the first of the Roman emperors, just on the eve of the Christian era, was said to have had the god Apollo for his father. Even in his lifetime Augustus was worshiped as god. In Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt, Spain, Italy, and Gaul this living man was given the veneration of a god. One inscription in Pergamum reads thus: "God of God, Augustus, Providence of all lands, all seas, Augustus, the World's Savior." Says another inscription to him: "To Augustus, God and Savior. The birth of this god was for the whole world the beginning of good news."

Not only kings and conquerors, but philosophers and founders of religions were divinized. Almost at once after Plato's death it was said that a god had been his father; and altars began to be raised to the divine philosopher.

Finally, as we have already noted, the Roman emperors were worshiped and enrolled among the gods after death by decree of the Senate.

5. *This Custom Carried Over into Christianity.*

Now when the great debate arose in the Christian church, and continued for three hundred years, as to the nature of Jesus, what would be the natural answer of Graeco-Roman Christians, thus familiarized with divine heroes, thus accustomed to see veneration for great men expressed by divinizing them? There is but one reasonable answer to this question. While the normal Jew, jealous for the Unity of God, would shrink from divinizing Jesus, the normal Graeco-Roman, lax in his use of the word God, would find it the most natural thing in the world to divinize him and worship him.

6. *A Caution.*

We must add this word of caution. We do not mean to say, and we must not, that the divinizing of Jesus took place in blind imitation of the pagan process of making gods and

demi-gods of great men. There was no such imitation. We may go further and state that the Graeco-Roman Christians had a horror of pagan worship, and would have been shocked to think that they retained any element of it.

But while this is true, it is equally true that the Graeco-Roman Christians could not possibly destroy the habits of thought that they brought with them from paganism. It was practically inevitable that they should think of Jesus in substantially the same way as they once had thought of their divine heroes. The subtle influence of pagan thought and custom clung to them and unmistakably and decidedly acted upon them as Christians.

7. *Examples of Pagan Influence on Graeco-Roman Christians.*

The worship of saints, which began early in the church, was largely due to the habit of worshiping more than one god, a habit directly brought over by the pagan converts. Many of the so-called Christian saints, indeed, were only heathen demi-gods under another name. At times the worship of these saints became so similar to heathen worship that enlighted Christian leaders denounced it. The veneration of relics likewise was to a great extent colored by idolatrous excesses committed by Christians who had

remained under the influence of pagan habit. So memorial services at the graves of the dead were again defiled by heathen practices which still lingered in the memory of Greek and Roman Christians.

8. *Similar Influences in the Divinizing of Jesus.*

It is then impossible, absolutely impossible, to deny that pagan habits of thought, of feeling, of religious practice, colored the Christianity of that age. With this plain fact before us, what we say with regard to the deifying of Jesus is this: The natural and normal way for the Gentile Christians of that age to express high religious veneration for Jesus was by deifying him. That was their custom and their fathers' custom. That was what they were used to. That would be the spontaneous expression of their mind and soul.

CHAPTER XIX

THE NICENE FORMULA

1. *The "Pastor of Hermas."*

BEFORE the decreeing of the deity of Jesus actually came to pass, there was a long period of debates and uncertainty. So complete a change as the setting up of a second divine Person beside God the Father could not take place without hesitation, scruple, and protest. Let us cite one instance of the faith of early Christianity as to the nature of Jesus, that we may see how far that faith was from the deification which the church finally promulgated.

The "Pastor" or "Shepherd" of Hermas is one of the oldest writings from a Christian source. It was composed somewhere in the interval between 140 and 154 A.D. That is to say, it appeared within probably twenty-five years after the fourth Gospel. The book had an extraordinary popularity in the Christian communities of the time. Indeed, it was regarded as divinely inspired. It was added to the New Testament writings and was read as Scripture in hundreds of Christian churches. Some of the greatest

men of the early church regarded it as taking rank with the inspired books of the Bible, for instance, Irenaeus in the second century, and Clement of Alexandria and Origen in the third.

Here then is a book of immense importance in the primitive church; a book which was used in the worship of the church and devoutly read as Scripture. We must conclude that the teachings of such a book found echo in wide sections of the church, and represented the thought and belief of thousands of Christians. Now this book teaches of Jesus that he was a man into whom the Spirit of God has descended. He had been worthy of the coming of the Spirit by his noble and pure life; and after the Spirit's descent he remained faithful and true, never offending the Spirit. Because of this fidelity God, after taking counsel "with the Holy Spirit and the glorious angels" determined to give Jesus a "place of rest."

2. *The "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles."*

A similar idea of Jesus as a noble Servant of God appears in a still older book, "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," written in 120 or 125 A.D. The oldest Christian prayers, next to the New Testament, are in this little treatise. Listen to the communion-prayers there given: "We thank Thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David,

Thy servant, which Thou madest known to us through Jesus, Thy Servant"; "We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou madest known to us through Jesus, Thy Servant. To Thee be the glory forever!"; "We thank Thee, Holy Father, for Thy holy name which Thou didst cause to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which Thou madest known to us through Jesus, Thy Servant. To Thee be the glory forever!"

It would be impossible to state more distinctly that Jesus is a created nature, nobly meriting to be God's messenger of Truth, a "holy Servant" through whom we are led to God. Not to Jesus are the prayers addressed. For the salvation which came through Jesus it is to the Father that gratitude is expressed.

3. *The Hopeless Intricacy of the Debate.*

The other theory, namely, that Jesus had a preëxistent life in heaven went stumbling on. One view was that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were not three Persons, but only three ways of speaking of the same Person. This opinion prevailed for a long time, and probably a majority of Christian bishops believed it for a time. Others said, "No, the Father is a divine Person, and Jesus is a second divine Person." To this still others objected: "Then you believe in two

Gods!" A synod of bishops met in Antioch, and, while declaring that Jesus was divine, still said that he was not of the same substance as the Father.

The matter was brought to a head by an Alexandrian priest named Arius. According to him, Jesus was the preëxisting divine "Word," but still was of a different substance from the Father. For and against the conflict raged, until the peace of the church was lost in wrangling, and a hopeless division of Christians seemed at hand.

4. *Constantine and the Council of Nice.*

At this point the Emperor Constantine called the Christian bishops to meet in Nice, or Nicæa, a city of Bithynia, to restore peace to distracted Christendom. At the imperial command the bishops assembled in 325 for what is called the first General Council of the Church.

In the Council were three parties. First, the anti-Arians, whose intellectual leader was Athanasius,[1] stoutly holding that the Son was of

[1] ATHANASIUS is celebrated chiefly because he was the foremost defender of Trinitarian orthodoxy against Arius and the Arians. At the time of the Council of Nice in 325, Athanasius was a deacon, but within three years, because of the fame he had won in his controversy with the Arians, he was made bishop of Alexandria. He died in 373, so he was forty-five years a bishop. Never perhaps has any other bishop had the vicissitudes that befell Athana-

the same substance as the Father; second, the Arians, who denied this; and third, a compromising party that largely sympathized with Arius, but sought a middle ground. To this last section of the Council Eusebius, the church-historian, belonged.

Finally the Council decreed, perhaps to a considerable extent by the influence of the Emperor, that the Son was "consubstantial" with the Father, that is, of the same divine substance as the Father. Thus the foundation was laid for the doctrine of the Trinity. Two bishops refused to accept the decree and were banished by Constantine. Constantine, moreover, sent Arius into exile, and declared it a matter for capital punishment to be found in possession of books favoring the Arian side.

sius. He was five times exiled from his flock and as many times recalled, according to whether the prevailing power was Arian or anti-Arian. Twenty years of his episcopal tenure were spent in exile.

Athanasius was not a great scholar like Origen and Jerome; nor a profound theologian like Augustine. But he was a masterful leader of a cause, an inflexible opponent of Arianism, and a ceaseless worker in behalf of his principles. He was moreover an admirer of monasticism. A testimony of this latter trait is his "Life of Antony." This book is hardly a credit to the intelligence of so great a man, for it is filled with crude superstition, and apparently holds as true the wild legends and absurd miracles which abound in monkish tradition.

The great debate was not ended with the Council of Nice. Later on other controversies arose as to whether Jesus had a real human nature; again, whether he were not born as a human being and only later elevated to divinity; and still further, whether he had only one will or two wills.

5. *The Holy Ghost.*

The early church had the vaguest ideas of the Holy Ghost. The "Shepherd of Hermas," that we mentioned before, thought that it was the Holy Ghost that dwelt in Jesus. Others said that the Holy Ghost was not a separate Person, but only the energy of the Father working in behalf of men. As late as 380 a great theologian, Gregory of Nazianzen, wrote: "Some of our wise men believe that the Holy Ghost is an energy; others that He is a creature; others that He is God." But soon after this it was decided that the Holy Ghost is a Person forming, along with Father and Son, the Trinity, the threefold Godhead, which is regarded by orthodox churches as a fundamental belief of Christian faith.

6. *Conclusion.*

The church then at last declared the Trinity-dogma to be a divine truth. It reached this conclusion only after three hundred years of

groping, of stumbling, of quarrel, and of controversy. In reaching it the church contradicted many of the oldest witnesses to the primitive faith of the first disciples. If we Unitarians cannot accept this dogma, we may be comforted by thinking that there is no trace of it in the first preaching of the apostles, and that there is nothing so difficult and tangled in the clear and sweet words of the simple Son of man.

PART III

HOW THE CHURCH GREW

CHAPTER XX

CHRISTIANS BECOME PERSECUTORS

1. *A Painful Chapter in History.*

WE have now to study an unpleasant and painful chapter in the history of the Christian church. We are to see that the spirit of persecution appeared at an early date among Christians, and that it grew with the centuries until at last it became the official teaching and practice of orthodox Christianity that heretics might be robbed and exiled and even killed. Who would have thought that Christians could ever descend to this? They had suffered terrible persecution themselves from a pagan empire; and they were accustomed to meditate on the words of Jesus counseling them to love always and to injure never. Yet the memory of their own sufferings did not keep them from making others suffer; and the merciful and benignant teaching and example of Jesus did not avail to give them charity for the heretic. There is no worse scandal in history than this. But we must turn our attention to it both as a warning of the

abuses of the dogmatizing spirit, and as a reminder of how slowly, but how splendidly, Liberty has made its way in this world.

2. *Early Christian Protest against Intolerance.*

Christians had been taught a bitter lesson, one would think, by the persecution inflicted on them, first by the Jews and then by the Romans. In those dark days they cried out for justice and for the privilege of following their convictions. They denounced the crime of forcing any man's conscience; and declared it to be an outrage against religion itself to promote religion by violence. Some of the noblest words ever spoken in behalf of liberty were spoken then by these Christians in distress. "It is a triumph of irreligion to destroy the liberty of religion, and to violate the free choice of faith," says Tertullian. The same writer gives us this great principle: "To worship according to our conscience is a law of nature and of human nature."

Lactantius, one of the most eloquent of the early Christian writers, tutor to Crispus, the son of Constantine, says: "No violence! Not by blows but by persuasion is religion to prosper." And again: "If you defend religion by penalties and bloodshed you really do not defend it, but defile it."

3. *The Sad Change when Christianity was Triumphant.*

Noble as were those early Christian protests against intolerance, they were forgotten almost as soon as the days of persecution passed. We have already seen that soon after the Council of Nice Constantine decreed that Arian books should be burned, and that death should be inflicted upon all who persisted in possessing them. This was the beginning of a series of laws issued by Christian emperors and designed to crush out heresy by force and to make liberty of conscience impossible. Let us mention some of these laws with the dates of promulgation, that we may understand how hard a fight Liberty has had, and how heavy have been the sacrifices made by heroic men and women to maintain it:

A.D. 381 "Let no place be granted for heretical worship. We forbid heretical meetings in cities. If in opposition the heretics raise any disturbance, let them be driven outside the city walls."

381 "The Manichean heretics are not allowed to bequeath or inherit property. Their property is to go to the public treasury."

383 A law directly appealing to mob violence, thus: "All heretics are forbidden to hold meetings, or to collect audiences even in private houses. If they persist in assembling, we give permission to all persons of the true faith to drive them out."

A law of the same year forbids heretics to ordain ministers.

407 Heresy is made a public crime; the property of a heretic is confiscated and given to his relatives of "the true faith"; the last will and testament of a heretic is invalid; if provincial governors neglect to hunt down heresy, they are heavily fined.

409 If men of rank help the growth of heresy by keeping silent concerning it, they shall be deprived of their property and exiled.

4. *Summary of these Laws.*

From 326 to 435 about one hundred forty imperial laws of this character were issued against liberty of conscience. Of these twenty-nine were in one form or another against Jews; five more forbade Jews to hold Christian slaves,

though Christians might hold Jewish slaves; seven were directed against Christians who returned to paganism; and twenty-five were against pagans. Others were against certain specific forms of heresy.

Even if these laws were not everywhere and always enforced, they still wrought immeasurable mischief and prepared the way for the pillage and murder visited on heretics in the Middle Ages.

5. *Opinions of Great Christian Writers and Theologians on this Intolerance.*

The noble words of Tertullian and Lactantius quoted earlier in this chapter were soon forgotten. As soon as Christian emperors became intolerant, Christian bishops followed. The result is that we have great men, men called "Fathers of the Church," not only approving these persecutions, but actually urging emperors to become still more cruel. Nothing more terrible could be said of Christian leaders than that they should so far have forgotten humanity, and violated the teachings of Jesus, as to defend and demand confiscation, outlawry and exile for other Christians who held different dogmas from their own. Let us give an instance or two.

Pope Leo I, a bishop of Rome in the middle of the fifth century, writes to his namesake, Leo the Emperor, bidding him be vigorous against heretics. "Expel heretics from your city," says the Roman bishop, "that they may not contaminate God's holy people." This same Leo I writes to the Empress Pulchria, complaining that too much leniency has been shown to the heretic Eutyches. Eutyches has been expelled from Constantinople, but Leo warns the Empress that this is not enough: "Drive him still further away that he may not have the comforts that his followers are now bringing him."

The great Augustine, held to be the profoundest mind in early Christian history, once disapproved of persecution. He overcame his scruple later as these words will show: "Experience has taught me the falseness of my former advocacy of gentle treatment with heretics. My own city was wholly Donatist, and was converted to the unity of orthodoxy by terror of the imperial laws."

It would be wrong to persecute my church, Augustine says, but good to persecute other churches. "That persecution is unjust which impious men decree against the church of God. But that persecution is just which the church of God decrees against impious men."

From Augustine finally let us quote these sad

sentences: "When kings pass laws against the truth, they make martyrs. When they pass laws against heretics, these heretics may die, but God will not regard them as martyrs." [1]

[1] SAINT AUGUSTINE was born at Tagaste in North Africa in 354. He received his first religious impressions from his mother, Monica, of whom he always speaks with veneration. While studying rhetoric and literature at Carthage he forgot his early lessons in virtue and fell into deplorable ways of living. But, however much he sinned, he did not lose the vision of truth and of the higher life. He could not rest in evil but aspired to the good. Attracted by the strictness of the Manichean heretics, he joined them and remained with them from his nineteenth to his twenty-eighth year. In 384 he went to Milan and in 387 was converted to orthodox Christianity largely by the sermons of Ambrose, the famous bishop of that city. Returning to North Africa he was made priest and later bishop of Hippo, where he died in 430.

Augustine was a very prolific writer, and probably is to be ranked as the greatest Christian thinker. He has influenced the Christian churches, both Protestant and Catholic, more perhaps than any other man since the apostle Paul. His influence has not always been good. Sometimes it has been bad, decidedly and deplorably bad. For example, he gave his name and unsurpassed influence to the cause of intolerance and persecution. For over one thousand years men quoted Augustine's persecution of the sect of Donatists as a justification of their own infamous cruelties. Again, in his controversy with the Pelagian heretics, he declared roundly for the belief that every child is born in sin and under the wrath of God. Consequently, he said, every infant dying without baptism goes to hell

CHAPTER XXI

PERSECUTION IN LATER TIMES

1. *The Interest of this Subject.*

ALTHOUGH this book has the early history of Christianity for its main subject, we are going to follow this matter of intolerance through later ages. For, in the first place, nothing is more splendid than the struggles of growing Liberty; and in the second place, we of a liberal faith have a special interest in this subject, since our Unitarian forefathers were among the first and noblest spokesmen for freedom of conscience in days when it took courage to speak for it.

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for all eternity. This fearful dogma, never equalled in any savage religion in ferocity, has been held through centuries, mainly on Augustine's authority.

The works by which he is most favorably known are "The City of God" and the "Confessions." This latter book is one of the world's classics in spiritual autobiography. It is really a colloquy between Augustine's soul and God. His innermost self is revealed there, his sins, his hope, his faith. Reading it we wish that we could forget that a man who could be so candid, so humble, and so tender-hearted, ever wrought such fearful harm as has resulted from his approval of persecution, and his sentencing of unsprinkled babes to hell.

We are to see now how the last scruple against persecution unto bloodshed disappeared, and how at last it became an official teaching and an accepted doctrine that the heretic should be put to death.

2. *Early Shrinking from the Death Penalty.*

John Chrysostom, a great bishop of Constantinople in the fifth century (345–438), thus tells of the reluctance of Christians to punish heretics by death: "The Lord does not forbid us to silence heretics, to destroy their liberty of speaking or assembling, or to nullify their contracts. He only forbids us to kill them."

Such doubtless was the general Christian opinion of that age. Actually to approve of murdering a man because of his conscientious convictions was as yet impossible to the majority of Christian consciences. Yet so terrible is the persecuting spirit, once it enters upon violence, that at about the time these words of Chrysostom were written occurred the first judicial murder of a heretic in which Christian bishops took part.

3. *Priscillian.*

Priscillian, a Spaniard, is the man who died as the first martyr-heretic put to death by civil law on the accusation of Christians and clergymen. Two bishops had hounded him implacably,

and had him brought before a court at Treves where Maximus, a co-emperor with Theodosius, lived. Two other bishops, making four in all, demanded the utmost severity against Priscillian. Maximus, a scoundrel who coveted the rich estates of Priscillian, lent his aid to the ferocious bishops, and Priscillian, convicted of heresy, magic, impiety, and other wickedness, was condemned to death by the sword with four of his followers, one of these a noble matron of Bordeaux.

A shudder ran through the Christian church at the execution of Priscillian. The garment of Christ's religion had the stain of murder on it now, and many Christians who had not scrupled at lesser penalties felt shame and indignation. Two of the greatest bishops of that age, Martin of Tours and Ambrose of Milan, protested against the crime. But the deed was done. The Christian conscience was becoming hardened. The day was coming, when not one murder, but hundreds of murders of heretics would occur, not only without protest, but with universal approbation.

4. *Another Summary of Laws against Heretics.*

1194 Ildefons, King of Aragon, gives permission to any one to inflict on Waldensian

heretics in his kingdom any pain, loss, or other evil, except mutilation and death. If any one receive Waldensians into his house, he shall have his property confiscated.

1197 Pedro, King of Aragon, decrees death by fire for heretics.

1224 The Emperor Frederic II decrees against heretics either death by fire or the cutting out of the tongue at the judge's discretion.

1231 Frederic II orders death by fire for heretics in Neapolitan lands.

1238 Frederic II makes death by fire the absolute law of the whole Empire. This was adopted into the municipal law of North and South Germany and taken into the church's law, canon-law as it is called.

1270 Death at the stake made a national law for heretics in France.

1401 Death for heresy made a national law in England.

5. *How these Laws were Carried Out.*

We shall go into no details regarding the carrying out of these brutal laws. Let it be enough to say that Christian men and Christian bishops took it upon themselves through several cen-

turies to hunt down heretics, to confiscate their property, and to put them to death. Murder for heresy became not merely common, but universal in Europe. How many thousands died, how many rotted in fearful prisons, how many were hunted into exile we do not know. That they were a vast multitude we do know.

See what Liberty has cost! Devoutly we may thank God that so many courageous men and women lived who followed their convictions unterrified by the sword and the stake, the dungeon and exile, poverty, starvation, and shame!

6. *The Reformers.*

Most of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation would not hesitate to approve the killing of men who differed from themselves. No more ferocious advocates of the stake for heretics ever lived than Bucer and Beza. Zwingli was the one great leader of a Protestant orthodox body who favored liberty of conscience. Let it be remembered to his honor.

7. *Servetus.*

Servetus, an anti-Trinitarian Spanish scholar, no less remarkable in theology than in medicine, wrote to Calvin, the Genevan reformer, that he was going to visit Geneva, whereupon Calvin writes to his friend Farel, February 13, 1547:

"He (Servetus) will come here if it is agreeable to me. But I am not going to make any promises. If he does come, I will never allow him to leave here alive, should this be in my power."

Servetus did go to Geneva and Calvin had him burned at the stake. After the murder, Melancthon, the friend of Luther, who has in some strange manner gained the name of "the meek Melancthon," wrote to Calvin thus: "The church to-day owes you gratitude, and will owe you gratitude to all posterity. Your sentence I heartily approve. I assert that your magistrates acted justly in killing that blasphemer after due trial."

8. *Our Unitarian Tradition.*

This persecuting spirit in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries raged particularly against those who could not accept the dogma of the Trinity. In Poland, where flourishing Unitarian churches were converting many of the most intelligent men of the kingdom, the wrath of Catholics and Protestants alike was excited against them. Terrible and glorious incidents occurred.

A rich merchant named John Tyscovicius was convicted of "blaspheming," as it was said, against the Trinity. The sentence pronounced upon him, and carried out, was that he should

have his tongue pierced and his hands and feet cut off, then that he should be beheaded and his body burned. This was in 1611.

This murder was followed by the expulsion of the Unitarians from Rakow, their chief seat of influence. In 1655 the ignorant peasants of several districts of Poland were stirred up to attack them, and, blindly obedient to the ecclesiastics, who were the prime movers in the crime, they hunted down these arch-heretics, pillaged their property, and put numbers of them to death. In 1660 the Unitarians were ordered to leave the Kingdom of Poland at once unless they would join either the Catholic church or one of the recognized Protestant churches. In case of disobedience they might be brought to trial and even punished with death. Thousands of those noble confessors bade farewell to country, home and property and took their way into exile.

But before their expulsion they had published in the Polish language in 1605 the famous Catechism of Rakow, or Rakovian Catechism. In 1659 there was published at Amsterdam an edition of this catechism which contains a noble preface. This preface refers to the many creeds and catechisms of orthodoxy by which "a yoke is imposed upon Christians to swear to the words and opinions of men from which every one

who deviates in the least is immediately assailed by the thunderbolt of an anathema, is treated as a heretic, as a vile and mischievous person, is excluded from heaven, consigned to hell, and doomed to the torment of eternal fire.

"Far from us be this disposition, or rather madness. While we compose a catechism, we prescribe nothing to any man. While we declare our own opinion, we oppress no one. Let every person enjoy the freedom of his own judgment in religion; only let it be permitted to us also to exhibit our view of divine things without injuring or calumniating others. For this is the golden liberty of prophesying which the sacred books of the New Testament so earnestly commend to us."

Let it be remembered forever, that this is the first catechism of a Christian church to speak out in specific words for perfect liberty of conscience. Those sentences just quoted form one of the most splendid charters of human freedom. Written at a time when theological hatred still raged, and the memory of dungeon and stake was still vivid, they shine on a dark world with the brilliance of the pure teaching of Jesus. Once again, as was the case with the good Samaritan, it was the despised heretic who was nearest to the mind of God.

This teaching of liberty and toleration became

distinctive of Unitarians. It was a reproach uttered by both Catholic and Protestant orthodoxy, that "only the Socinians" believed in the absurdity of toleration — Socinians being a name for Unitarians derived from two of their great leaders, Laelius Socinus and Faustus Socinus. It may be said further that toleration was spread largely by men who had come directly or indirectly in Holland under the influence of the exiled Unitarians, though never belonging to that body, such as John Locke, Grotius, and even Roger Williams.

CHAPTER XXII

THE GROWTH OF AUTHORITY

1. *The Oldest Title of the Christian Church.*

THE Christian religion began as a Holy Community. Enthusiasm for the devout life, an ardent faith, a thrilling hope, a rigid observance of morals, a detachment from worldy things and a fervent aspiration for heavenly — all this formed the Christian temper and furnished the Christian bond of union in the earliest age of the faith. The primitive name of the church is "Holy" church. The word "Catholic" by which the great central organization of Christendom is known in history came into general use later. The phrase "Catholic Church," however, is very old, first appearing about 115 A.D. in a letter of Ignatius the Martyr, head of the church in Antioch. But the oldest of all terms and ideas for the church is that it is holy — a Holy Community — an Assembly of the Saints.

2. *Holiness, Not Authority, the Great Concern.*

Now a church with such a spirit is not likely to be concerned much with government, organi-

zation, federation. It will be ruled by faith and charity. It will be held together by love of the brethren. It will be kept united by piety. Its great men will be not rulers and officials, but such as have the "gifts" we mentioned in another chapter, the inner gifts, that is, that are supposed to be the fruits of piety. In such a church the mere official or administrator will hold an inferior place to the saintly leader in prayer, or to the inspired preacher. Of course, there had to be officers in each congregation to look after practical details. But these officers, whether called elders or bishops, were not regarded as holding an office in itself divine. The divine thing, the work of God in the churches, was manifested only in holiness and only by the holy. The highest persons in the church, says one of the Christian writers, Clement of Alexandria, about the year 200, are the "gnostics." By this term Clement means Christians of enlightened piety.

To put this important matter in other words: Christianity began as a mighty enthusiasm. Jesus had come to bring salvation. He had ordered his followers to observe a certain way of life — charity, meekness, purity, unworldliness. He would soon come again from heaven to destroy this wicked world and to set up his blessed kingdom. And if his disciples should die

before his second coming, they would pass into the glorious Paradise of God. Let us then with all our hearts live unto holiness! Let us sing and fast and pray until the Lord come! Let us cast away the world and worldly devices! Let us watch and wait and sigh till the evil time be past and the promised glory be revealed!

So said the early believers. With such sentiments, it can easily be seen that they would take thought for administrative efficiency only when compelled by necessity. Something else and something nobler was in their minds and hearts than church law and ecclesiastical authority.

3. *The Era of Authority Hastened by Heresy.*

Religions cannot live forever on enthusiasm. However firm their faith and ardent their hope, they must take practical measures of organization and discipline. They must have rulers and officials; and as they spread they must have national and international federation. As Christianity grew older, as it saw its hope and expectation of the second coming of Jesus unfulfilled through years and then through generations, it had to submit to the law of all societies, and make its organization more and more thorough.

This process was hastened by the appearance of heresy; that is, doctrines that differ from the teachings commonly held by the Christian congregations. These heretical ideas, these novelties departing from the generally accepted beliefs, resulted in the establishing of separate churches. Against this tendency to set up sectarian congregations, the great central body of Christendom fought strenuously. Attacked by heresy, the Church perfected her means of retaining unity. That meant greater authority to the officials, that is, to the bishops. The bishops came into new and larger powers. They checked to a great extent the free preaching of wandering missionaries. They subjected "prophets" to control, lest there be heresy in the prophesying. They became almost the exclusive means by which the congregations appealed to one another and took counsel together in the face of heretical danger. Once subordinate, the bishops grew to predominance. Legalized forms then began to replace the old free spirit. Official authority ruled instead of the old-time "gifts," and the hierarchical church was born.

4. *Steps in the Growth of Authority.*

One other consequence followed from the more strict organization that resulted from heresy.

The great old-time test of holiness gave way to theological correctness. Christianity, that at first meant a holy life, now meant true doctrine. Let it be observed how the two developments of the creed and the episcopate proceeded together. The church in order to preserve unity against heresy insisted upon a creed. And then in order to preserve the creed and supervise the teaching of the creed, she placed greater and greater authority in the hands of the officials charged with this task, the bishops.

Then came the next step. Since doctrine had become of such immense importance, the church regarded herself as the guardian of true belief. This true belief she claimed had been given directly into her keeping by the apostles, and by them transmitted through the succession of pastors and teachers. The pastors thus handing on the faith from age to age were the bishops. Thus the bishops continued the work of apostles. Hence the office of bishops was considered an apostolic office, a divine institution, and the authority of bishops was the authority of God.

By the second half of the third century this theory of the divine episcopate was fully developed. The writer in whom we first find it completely stated is Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, the chief see of North Africa. Others earlier than Cyprian had said much in praise of

bishops. Ignatius, as early as 115, is eloquent in praise of the bishops' leadership, and of the necessity of holding fast to union with them. But it is Cyprian who carries the theory of the divine function of bishops to the utmost limit. The church rests on the bishops, he says. The union of the people with Christ depends on their obedience to the bishops. Bishops are not merely officials; they are the very basis of the Christian religion, the rock on which the Lord built the church. The bishops are in their turn held together by a voluntary union of concord and charity. Thus the enforced obedience of the people to the bishops, and the free union of bishops with one another constitute the church's oneness, and the safeguard of faith and the promise of salvation.

This language of legalism and officialism is assuredly not the native speech of the first free communities who recognized only the authority of inner and spiritual gifts. The church had lost its glorious youth, its first flaming enthusiasm and individual freedom. But it had gained in worldly wisdom and efficiency. If with the efficiency some error was mingled, let us say again that truth was not expelled by the error so long as the church kept alive the memory of Jesus, and preached his example to mankind.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PAPACY

1. *Importance of the Papacy.*

We have just seen that Cyprian regarded all the bishops of the church as held together by charity and good will. The bond of their union, he says, is free and fraternal coöperation. The bishops of certain venerable churches might have special influence, he thought, but no bishop might command another. No absolute authority over bishops existed in the constitution of the church. We are now going to see how completely this theory was broken to pieces. We are going to examine briefly how one bishop rose above the others and imposed his will upon them all. Gradually — all these great changes in the faith of Christendom were gradual — the bishop of Rome took to himself power over the whole church, until at last he made the church believe that his power was divine and that his decisions in matters of faith were infallible. Nothing in all history since the time of Jesus is of greater importance than the growth of papal authority. It is absolutely necessary that we study it.

2. *Veneration of the World for Rome.*

If it was to be that one city should take preeminence over all others in the Christian world, it was inevitable that this city should be Rome. In the ancient world Rome was regarded with a veneration which it is hard for us to grasp, and impossible to exaggerate. Rome was actually worshiped. As far away as Smyrna we we find a temple to Dea Roma, Divine Rome. The worship of the emperors, which was the official religion of the Empire when Christianity began to spread, added to the religious reverence which was given to the city, so close together were the ideas of the divine Caesar and his Eternal City.

In the second place, Rome ruled the world. Rome was the first city, and has been perhaps the only city to feel a world responsibility. Her law was world law. Her conquests were world conquests. She was the guardian and teacher of mankind from Mesopotamia to Britain, from the Danube to the Nile. Hence the extraordinary titles given to the emperors in old inscriptions, as for example: "Benefactor of the whole world," applied to Tiberius; "Savior of the whole world," to Claudius; "Good Angel of the whole world," to Nero; "Savior and Benefactor of all men," to Vespasian; "Savior of

the whole world, God and son of God," to Trajan.

"Italy," writes the elder Pliny, "is the nurse and parent to every land. Italy has been chosen by the gods themselves to add splendor even to heaven; to gather together the scattered governments of the earth; to supersede the diverse and rude languages of the world by the usage of our Latin tongue; in a word, to build up all the nations of man into a single fatherland as wide as the world."

3. *The World Accustomed to Obey Rome.*

As a result of this supremacy of Rome the world, at about the time that Christianity began to pervade the Empire, was rather thoroughly Romanized. All peoples recognized Roman law. All provinces sought Roman favor. From Italy to the ends of the Roman Empire all men of any standing or ambition coveted Roman citizenship. We have seen how proudly Paul proclaimed himself a Roman citizen. Local religions gave way in many places to the prevailing Caesar worship. Even the style of one's clothes and the cut of one's beard were fashioned after the Roman manner.

It can easily be seen from all this how natural, how inevitable, it was that Rome should become the city of chief authority for the Christian

church. People had grown used to looking to Rome for law and obeying when Rome spoke. As pagans had turned to the eternal city to hear the emperor's command, so it would be likely that Christians should turn there to hear the Pope's. Even after Constantine transferred the capital of the Empire to Constantinople, early in the fourth century, Rome retained its majesty. The "Eternal City," the "Holy City" it has remained through all ages.

4. *Distinction of the Church at Rome.*

The Christian church in the city of Rome had, moreover, another title to supremacy. Its tradition was that the apostles Peter and Paul were martyred in the city under Nero. The two apostles were co-founders of the church in Rome, it was said; their traditions lived in Rome; their tombs were shown and venerated there.

No other church in Christendom, of course, could boast so splendid an origin. When, therefore, any question concerning apostolic practice or belief arose, what was more natural than that the other churches should turn to Rome, where the tradition of Peter and Paul survived, and defer to the word that came from Rome?

For these two supreme historic reasons — Rome's place in the world's history, and the

church of Rome's distinction in Christian history — let us repeat, it was inevitable that first the church, and then the bishop of Rome, should take the leadership of Christendom.

5. *Peter and Paul in Rome.*

We cannot here discuss the truth of the tradition just referred to, that Peter and Paul were co-founders of the Roman congregation. Peter, by the way, is generally regarded as the first bishop of Rome and the founder of the Papacy. Paul is only his associate. It is gravely disputed among scholars whether Peter ever was in Rome. In favor of his presence is the old tradition that he died a martyr and that his tomb was venerated there. On the other hand are serious historical difficulties. Let us say that the question is by no means settled.

But what we do know with absolute certainty is that Paul was not a founder of the church at Rome, and with next to absolute certainty that Peter was not. Paul wrote a letter to a Christian church in Rome before he had ever been there. Therefore he could not have founded it. As for Peter, we may be perfectly sure that while he was still in Jerusalem or Antioch, Christianity had been established in Rome, most likely by converted Jews. For when Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, about 59 A.D., the church

there was old enough and powerful enough to lead Paul to say, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world." So the church at Rome was founded considerably before 59 A.D. But, if Peter had been there in that early time, the Acts of the Apostles, in recounting Peter's missionary career, would assuredly have mentioned it as the most glorious episode of all. But not a word is said in the Acts of any Roman journey of Peter.

Peter and Paul were not the founders of the church at Rome; and the old legend that Peter was bishop of the Roman church for twenty-five years is nothing else than absurd. If Peter ever was in Rome, it could have been for no such period; and probably it was not until within a few months of his death.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TRIUMPH OF PAPAL POWER

1. *Was Peter Bishop of Rome?*

THE dogma underlying Papal supremacy is that Jesus made Peter head of the church in the famous text of the sixteenth chapter of Matthew: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Experts in biblical study generally suspect that verse, and reject it as not belonging to the sayings of Jesus. We are not to go into that matter now, as we are studying church history and not Scripture. Our present question is, If Peter ever was in Rome, did he act as bishop there and did a succession of bishops follow him?

Of any act of Peter as bishop of Rome we know absolutely nothing. Also there are grave doubts whether the church at Rome was governed by a bishop until about the year 160. It is probable, though not certain, that before this date the church at Rome was ruled not by one bishop, but by several together; that is, by a commission of "overseers" or bishops. Scholars express this by saying that the Roman episco-

pate in the beginning was not "monarchical," but "collegial," that is, not singly, but severally held. Hermas, about 160, always and repeatedly speaks of the "chiefs" of the Roman church, never of a "chief." Ignatius, a man always eager to insist on the authority of bishops, wrote about 115 a letter to the Roman church, absolutely without greeting or reference to a bishop of that church. His message is to the collective church at Rome, though the nature of his letter would have called for at least a mention of the bishop if the Roman church had been governed by one.

Our answer to our present question is: first, that we do not possess one trustworthy word of any act of Peter as bishop of Rome; secondly, the first clear reference that we have to the presence of Peter in Rome dates from about 170; thirdly, it is probable that up to about the middle of the second century, the Roman church, like the church in Corinth, was ruled by a board of overseers, not by one bishop; fourthly, if this latter position be true, then it is inaccurate to speak of the bishops of Rome as the successors of Peter for in the strict sense he would have had no successors for a century or more. But again we call attention to our insufficient evidence on this point. In the twilight of history we can only grope for the best probability.

2. *The Roman Church's First Act of Authority.*

In the year 95 we see the Roman church exercising the first act of authority in its known history. Trouble had broken out in the church at Corinth; and the church at Rome — mark that it is not the bishop of Rome — sends a letter of counsel, of admonition, of fraternal correction. In this letter no bishop of Rome is mentioned. The letter begins: "The church of God which sojourns at Rome to the church of God sojourning at Corinth." No orders are issued, no threats are made, no claim of supremacy is advanced. This letter, called the epistle of Clement, as tradition ascribes it to Clement (in the early lists of Roman bishops said to be the third successor of Peter), is an earnest Christian document filled with zeal and charity, a very model of pastoral solicitude.

3. *The Second Act of Authority.*

Observe the difference in the second act of authority that history shows us emanating from the Roman church. It is about a century later than the epistle of Clement. The churches in Asia had been celebrating Easter on a different day from that observed by the western churches. The Roman bishop of that time, Victor, called together his clergy to condemn the practice of

the Asiatic churches. Then he sent notice of this condemnation to the bishops of the principal cities, threatening at the same time to cut off from communion with the Roman church all who should celebrate the Easter of the Asiatics. As the church of Asia continued to protest against this interference with their custom, Victor proceeded to deny them communion and fellowship with the Christians at Rome.

Here we have a great change indeed. No longer does the Roman church speak the language of friendly admonition and fraternal advice. Its tone in Victor is harsh, arrogant, and threatening. It prefers to see the unity of the church broken rather than that its own authority should be disregarded. The real Papacy was born at last, and, as has often been said, this Easter controversy was its baptism.

It is, however, interesting to note that the other churches did not meekly submit to this first dictation of the Roman bishop. A positive and indignant protest was uttered against it. Irenaeus, the great bishop of Lyons, put himself at the head of those who denounced Victor's denial of fellowship to the Asiatics; and from later indications it would appear that Victor yielded and restored the churches of Asia to union with his own. If the Papacy was born, at least the old freedom had not died.

4. *One Further Act of Authority.*

About the year 240 the church and bishop of Rome again used the harsh word and the heavy hand. Stephen, then bishop of Rome, denounced Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, for re-baptizing converted heretics who had already been baptized in heresy. The baptism conferred by heretics is valid, said Stephen, and should not be repeated. Cyprian denied the validity of heretical baptism, and the quarrel went from bad to worse. Stephen at last made a threat to cut off Cyprian from communion with the Roman church; and finally, it would seem, did cut him off. Cyprian very pointedly refused to be dictated to by Stephen, and denied Stephen's right to interfere in the diocese of a brother bishop. Here is a sentence of Cyprian's written at the time: "No bishop has presumed to make himself a bishop of bishops, nor has had recourse to tyrannical threats in order to force his colleagues to obey him."

Again in this controversy it would appear that the Roman bishop had to yield. But these repeated assertions of authority, these claims of a right to control the other churches, made headway despite opposition, and opened the road to the full autocracy which the Papacy enjoyed in later times.

This controversy between Stephen and Cyprian has one other momentous feature. For the first time in history of which we have clear evidence a Roman bishop, namely, Stephen, claims to be the successor of Peter, and to ground his authority on the great text: "Thou art Peter." Up to that time we have absolutely no direct evidence that any bishop of Rome thought that this text applied to himself. But afterward the "Thou art Peter" text became the foundation of the Papacy and the warrant for every extension of Papal authority.

5. *Rapid Growth of Papal Power.*

The Papacy was now launched on its course toward the domination of Christendom. It had behind it the prestige of Rome, the incomparable names of Peter and Paul, and, finally, a presumed saying of Jesus in the Matthew text, which gave divine authority to its pretensions.

Before long other historical events helped its rise to supreme authority. All through the third century the "barbarians," as the rude tribes of Franks, Germans, Goths, and Vandals on the frontiers of the Empire were called, kept pushing back the Roman outposts. At last they overwhelmed the enfeebled resistance of a decaying empire and poured over the entire West from the Adriatic to the Atlantic. All the old politi-

cal institutions went down before them. The Emperor lived in Constantinople and kept only a shadow of authority in the western lands. The city of Rome was captured by the Goths under Alaric in 410, and a new age in history began.

With the Emperor absent, and the old Roman institutions dead, or as good as dead, the one power remaining in Italy with much dignity or prestige was the bishop of Rome. The barbarians, barely Christian as yet, for the most part yielded their allegiance to the successor of Saint Peter, and received obediently the commands that he imposed.

In the East it was different. The Greek and Asiatic churches had never been any too cordial to the Roman bishop, though they were willing to give him the eminence that belonged to the eternal city and Saint Peter's chair. However they were jealous of their own independence. They never had the mood of submission to such despotic acts as those of Victor in the Easter controversy and of Stephen in his struggle with Cyprian. As a result, while the Pope's power rose in the West, it declined in the East. Finally, the Greek churches cast off all communion with Rome, and have remained for now nine centuries outside of and hostile to the Latin church.

But in the western world the papal power

grew from age to age until the time came when the mere word of a Roman bishop was able to set great nations at war and to depose kings from their thrones. This represents a long journey from the humble Roman church of Clement's epistle. But again and again we have to remark how vastly Christian dogmas, Christian laws, and Christian institutions have grown beyond anything contained in the New Testament, and beyond any thought or wish or foresight of Jesus. Christianity is a body built up of many varied elements, pagan, barbarian, high and low, true and false, beautiful and ugly — but serving a high purpose because still retaining the memory of the words, the deeds, and the spirit of the Lord.

CHAPTER XXV

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

1. *The Severe Puritanism of the Early Church.*

We have already drawn attention to the important fact that the earliest name given by Christians to the church was "Holy Church." The church was a body of the elect, a company of saints. Whatever sins a man might have committed before his conversion were washed away in baptism. But after baptism the law of holiness strictly bound him. If as a baptized Christian he committed great sins, he could never be forgiven. Such a sinner was cut off from the church and doomed to the eternal punishment of hell. Neither the church nor God could forgive him. His lesser sins, the more common and frequent failings of human nature, might be forgiven at any time by alms, by prayer, by confession to God or to the brethren, by fasting or some other good work. But grave offenses were unforgivable both in time and eternity. On earth and in heaven the church was to be kept holy and undefiled by the exclusion of sinners.

This extreme severity of the early church is put in these uncompromising words in the epistle to the Hebrews: "For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." (Heb. 6: 4–6) And again: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb. 10: 26, 27)

2. *The First Step toward Leniency.*

Splendid as was the idea of the first Christians that the church was to be only for the holy, and that a great sinner was to be cut off from it here and hereafter, it was too rigorous a teaching to last long. We may regard it as unfortunate if we will, but we must accept it as true, that the church, composed more and more as time went on of average humanity, had to content herself with average morality. She had to make allowances for her sinning members and acknowledge that they had at least a chance of salvation.

The first step from rigor to laxness came with

the concession that Christians committing great sins after baptism might be forgiven once — but only once. The book called "The Pastor of Hermas" which we have already mentioned, one of the very earliest Christian writings, dating back to the middle of the second century, is almost wholly taken up with recounting this concession. One forgiveness of even great sins after baptism, lest men despair, is the plea of Hermas. But it must be kept in mind that this forgiveness is granted by God, not by the church nor by any minister of the church. The three conditions that Hermas demands of the sinner are repentance, an amendment of life, and expiation. But in none of these does Hermas describe the church as taking part. The process is wholly between God and the repentant soul.

3. *Further Steps Away from the Early Severity.*

About seventy-five years after Hermas a controversy broke out within the church which shows that leniency with the sinner was growing fast in Christian practice. We learn that at this time the church had ceased to put limits to God's forgiveness. She no longer asserted that God would not forgive the grave sins of baptized Christians, or that He would forgive them only once. She had become more modest and left

forgiveness entirely to God. But the church was more clearly defining its own attitude toward the membership of sinners. By committing grave sin a Christian still cut himself off from communion with the church, as had been the case from the beginning. But we now find — about 220 — that there has been devised an elaborate process for taking him back. If the sinner made public confession of his wickedness before the congregation, if he accepted from the bishop certain works of satisfaction, "he would be reconciled," that is, readmitted to Christian fellowship when his "works of satisfaction" had been performed.

These "works" were varied. They might be fasting one or two days a week for a certain number of months or years; or again, lying prostrate before the church door every Sunday for a set time; or they might in grave cases be imposed for life. When the term of the sentence was reached, or on the deathbed in the case of lifelong penance, the bishop, having assurance that the penitent had done what had been put upon him, reconciled him to the church. This reconciliation was not a forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness was God's alone. Reconciliation meant that the penitent, having fulfilled the church's conditions, was again granted the church's fellowship. Forgiveness in such a

case was confidently hoped for, since the sinner had so faithfully shown his sorrow and proved his amendment. But it was God's alone to pardon. The entire process of confession, the performance of the "works," and reconciliation, was called "penance."

This reconciliation to the church, after the performance of the penitential works, was allowed only once. If, after one reconciliation, a Christian fell again, the church had no more to do with him. Moreover there were three or four sins — murder was one of them, idolatry another — for which no penance was permitted. A Christian guilty of them was definitely and forever cut off from the church.

4. *Protests against Leniency.*

The old rigor of the church did not give way without a struggle. An early sect called Encratites fought for the principle that Christians should have nothing to do with the wicked world. They rejected marriage, and insisted on the ancient idea of holiness. With these rigorists the sinner had no chance at all, but was cut off from fellowship here and hope hereafter. About the year 220 came the controversy referred to in the preceding paragraphs. Callixtus, bishop of Rome, decided that Christians guilty of adultery, one of the three or four sins for which

penance had been traditionally denied, might be admitted to penance, and ultimately to reconciliation to the church and readmission.

This laxity roused a storm of protest. The great African writer, Tertullian, denounced it in terms of fierce invective. The sect of the Montanists declared that by thus readmitting Christians who had committed this enormity Callixtus created a church of the unholy, and they called on all Christians of severe morals to leave it.

Twenty-five years later another protest against the laxity of readmitting those Christians who had lapsed to idolatry under persecution was made by Novatian. Still later in Africa the great sect of the Donatists (fourth and fifth centuries) declared that priests and bishops who had denied Christ in the days of persecution could never be restored to the full privileges of the Christian church, and certainly could not validly act as ministers of Christ.

5. *The Victory of Laxity.*

All these protests failed. The church in accepting average humanity accepted average morality. In the course of time the process of penance lost its severity until at last the conditions of reconciliation became trivial even for great sins. A graver consequence of the great

change of attitude toward sin was that the church's reconciliation came to be regarded as divine pardon; that is, the church claimed the power to forgive sins, and appealed to the text, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16: 19) Finally as public penance fell into disuse, the confession of the sin was made not to the congregation, but to the priest. Thus began private confession, and the immense power which the claim to forgive sins places in the hands of the priesthood.

Christian history offers no more startling contrast than we have here. Look at the earliest church, not even allowing that God can forgive the grave sins of Christians. Look at the next age of the church, conceding reluctantly that God will forgive once. Then see the church not limiting God's pardon, but granting one and only one reconciliation of the sinner to Christian membership, provided he be not guilty of murder, adultery, or idolatry. At last this limitation is removed; later still, the reconciliation to the church becomes absolution from sin; and finally, retaining only a shadow of her former "penances," the church grants forgiveness for any and all sins if only they be confessed with the

semblance of contrition and absolved by the word of a priest.

Since this enormous presumption of priestly forgiveness rests on the text of the "keys," (Matt. 16: 19) let us conclude with quoting a great writer of the fifth century on this perversion of the text which was beginning in his day. Says Saint Jerome:[1] "Bishops and priests, not understanding this passage, fall into the pride of the Pharisees by thinking that they can condemn the innocent or absolve the guilty; whereas what counts with God is the life of the penitent, not the sentence of priests."

[1] SAINT JEROME was born of Christian parents in Dalmatia about 346. He was splendidly educated in Greek and Latin literature, and ardently desirous of giving his life to classical culture. But in a serious illness at Antioch in 374 he fancied himself before the judgment seat of God and heard the condemnation: "You are not a Christian. You are a Ciceronian." Jerome regarded this as a divine warning to betake himself to the serious task of perfecting himself in Christian virtue. Accordingly he went into the desert as a hermit and stayed there for five years. One precious result of his solitude was that he learned Hebrew. In Rome from 382 to 385 he began studies looking toward a new Latin translation of the Bible, studies that were to bear immortal fruit. In 386 he built himself a cell in Bethlehem, which was soon surrounded by the cells of other monks looking to him as leader, and there he prayed, studied, and wrote until he died in 420.

Jerome's greatest work is his Latin translation of the

CHAPTER XXVI

THE INFLUENCE OF MONASTICISM

1. *The Ascetic Spirit Not Exclusively Christian.*

EVEN before Christianity there had been men who, from a religious motive, gave up ordinary ways of living and either retired to solitary places for thought and contemplation, or went about as wandering preachers. The most celebrated of these pagan prophets who lived, not indeed before Christianity but entirely uninfluenced by Christianity, was Apollonius of

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Bible. This translation, called the Vulgate, is the official text of the Catholic church. His most interesting work is his letters. These letters are not always pleasant or edifying reading; for Jerome was a man of fierce temper who spared no opponent, and dealt gently with no adversary. His language is indeed frequently of disgusting violence. But one feels all the while in reading Jerome that one is in the presence of a rugged, honest man of courage, rude indeed, and barbaric, but outspoken with his own thought and feeling, and utterly careless whether anybody else agreed with him. Certainly we must give admiration to a man who so fearlessly denounced the corruption of the clergy in the city of Rome; who warned bishops that the office of presbyters was just as high as theirs; and who denounced as Pharisaism the pretension that priests could forgive sins.

Tyana, a heathen saint and miracle-worker, of whom a remarkable biography has come down to us. Some of the Cynic philosophers — as they are called — refused marriage, and abandoned property in order to live a life of reason, as they styled it, unmoved by the usual desires and ambitions of mankind. Diogenes in his tub was of this sect.

Such persons are called "ascetics." The word "asceticism" literally means exercise or practice. The ascetic then is the man or woman who exercises himself in the higher virtue, and practises the self-denial necessary thereto. The ascetic spirit is seen everywhere and in all religions. Christianity did not invent it, but carried it to a wider development than has existed in any other form of faith. There is in fact a natural kinship between the Christian and ascetic temper. Asceticism appeals to the heroic and valorous element of our nature. So does Christianity. Asceticism calls for sacrifice. So does Christianity. Asceticism says, "There is a higher virtue than is possible to the common man. Seek it." Jesus says, "If thou wouldst be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me." "Take not the easy, but the hard way of life," counsels asceticism. "Take up thy cross and come after me" is the appeal of Jesus.

2. *The Early Monks.*

It does not then surprise us to find that asceticism early took root in Christianity, flourished prodigiously, and has survived until to-day. The form in which we chiefly find it is monasticism.

The word "monk" means a solitary person, and this gives us a clew to the earliest form of monasticism. During the persecutions of the third century, it appears that many Christians fled to Egypt; and that some of them, attracted by the solitude, the climate, and the opportunity for a quiet and undisturbed life, began to live there as religious hermits. The number of these hermits grew rapidly until not only Egypt, but Palestine and Syria as well, held a considerable population of them. One of these desert monks gained such a reputation throughout Christendom that his example drew thousands to the solitary life. This was Antony, the most famous of the early monks, who died in 356 at the reputed age of one hundred five.

Some of these solitaries carried asceticism to fantastic extremes. The danger of asceticism is that it will be carried to excess. Ascetics often come to have an abnormal love for pain and penance, making them ends to be sought, instead of mere means of moral discipline. When asceticism is thus excessive it looks very much

like insanity. Certain of these early monks, for example, built themselves stone pillars and lived on top of them. These queer people were called Stylites, from the Greek word for pillar. Some of the pillars are said to have been sixty feet high. On this eminence the Stylite lived day and night, year in and year out. His food was brought to him by the people of the neighborhood, and raised aloft in a basket at the end of a rope. The most famous of these pillar-monks is Saint Simeon the Stylite, who lived in the fifth century.

3. *The "Common Life" Begins.*

The hermit form of monasticism could not last long. Man is a social animal, and even for ardent ascetics solitude after a while becomes intolerable. Accordingly we see at an early date a tendency in the hermit monks to come together in communities. Once they began to associate in this manner, rules were necessary for the maintenance of discipline and religious observance. With this "common" or community life monasticism entered upon the form in which its chief work in history has been done. The monk whose name is mainly associated with the earliest rule for monks living in community is Pachomius, whose date we may set down as 350.

The monastic rules have remained from the beginning unchanged in substance. They require that the monk shall be unmarried, that he shall enjoy no private property, that he shall be wholly obedient to the orders of his superior, that he shall wear a distinctive dress, and that he shall observe the day's duties of work or prayer or study according to the regulation of his monastery.

4. *Growth of Monasticism.*

Monks and monasteries, as has been said, were originally in remote places. Indeed one of the reasons impelling men to become monks was disgust or dread of "the world"; that is, cities, villages, or wherever else men and women lived normally together and carried on the work of life. But from the late fourth century on we find monasteries near or within cities and towns. Nothing could show more clearly than this how completely the original hermit idea was lost, and how inevitably the day was coming when the great and powerful bodies of monks were to have a mighty influence on the world which they had forsworn.

Saint Basil of Caesarea (329–377) and Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430) helped greatly in the development of monastic life and monastic rule. So likewise did the Irish monk Colum-

banus (543–615). But the rule for monks which became the classical model of conventual life for Western Europe was written by Saint Benedict (480–543), founder of the Benedictine order of monks. "Work and prayer" was the wholesome and noble watchword of Saint Benedict. He did not impose upon human nature burdens impossible to bear. His rule was not unfeelingly rigorous as was that of Columbanus, a fierce Irish cenobite. He ordered much normal work, several daily assemblies in chapel for the singing of the psalter and other prayers, and study with the copying of manuscripts for those capable of it. The Benedictine monks have done great services to civilization and to culture; and to this day the figure of Saint Benedict is, next to Saint Francis of Assisi, the noblest in the history of monastic founders.

Finally at the opening of the thirteenth century appeared two men who founded monastic orders which literally covered Europe and were among the first to send missionaries to newly-discovered America. These men were Saint Dominic, founder of the Friar Preachers, or Dominican order, and Saint Francis of Assisi, founder of the Friars Minor, or Franciscan order. Francis of Assisi is one of the most lovable men of all history. His single aim was to reproduce on earth the life of Jesus. In imitation of his

Master he would have his monks own nothing even collectively. He would forbid them to accept honors and distinction. He would have them as humble as the name he gave them implied, Friars Minor. His beautiful dream was shattered, but his exquisite life remains one of the treasures of mankind.

5. *Results of Monasticism.*

Monasticism has produced many scholars, saints and heroes. It has sent its courageous sons into all the world as missionaries. It has established schools and hospitals. It has created noble forms of worship, and given to the world a rich literature of devotion in poetry and prose. In candor we must at the same time say that it has been a prolific source of superstition. It has often degenerated into an institution which has thrown the cloak of sanctity over laziness and self-indulgence. Its influence induced the greatest church in all Christendom to teach that the monastic life is the highest of all, and thereby imply that there is a lesser sphere of God's service in the family, the home, and the state. Like every other Christian institution there is good and bad in it. Whether the good outweighs the bad in this instance it might puzzle the wisest head to say.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CONVERSION OF THE BARBARIANS

1. *The First Missions to the Barbarians were Arian.*

BEFORE the end of the fifth century there was a fairly definite end of the Roman Empire in Western Europe. The capital had long before been moved to Constantinople, and deserted Italy found itself overrun by the tribes of the North. New races had come upon the scene of European history, and with them a new task for the Christian church, as these races were at first heathen. How great the change was, and how great the task, we may perceive from this partial list of the invasions:

In 429 the Vandals had established a kingdom in North Africa.

In 410 the Visigoths had established a kingdom in Spain.

In 493 the Ostrogoths had established a kingdom in North Italy.

In 568 the Lombards had established a kingdom in North Italy.

The first Christian missions among these people were undertaken by the Arians, the followers of Arius, who did not believe the orthodox Trinitarian doctrine, but held that the Son is not of the same substance as the Father. The most celebrated of these missionaries, indeed one of the greatest missionaries in Christian history, was Ulfilas (died 381), who translated the Bible into the language of his Gothic converts. This is the first translation of the Scriptures into a "barbaric tongue." The work of Ulfilas and his fellow missionaries resulted in making Arian Christianity, and not the orthodoxy held in Rome, the prevailing religion of the Goths.

2. *The Two Forces that Overcame Western Arianism.*

Two powerful influences, however, checked the spread of Arian Christianity and at last converted the Goths and Germans to orthodox Trinitarianism. The first of these influences was the Papacy. As the barbarian invasion made its way westward, it lost sight of the signs and vestiges of imperial power. The emperor counted for comparatively little in the West. But the new peoples saw in Rome another power of even more impressive prestige than the emperor's. They saw the bishop of Rome claiming

the inheritance of the prince of the apostles, as well as possessing the renown and majesty which went along with the rulership of the eternal city, Rome. It was inevitable that, sooner or later, the barbarians just initiated into civilization, and eager to learn from the Empire and the city of Rome, which had cast its spell on them when they were still in the northern forests, — it was inevitable that they should accept the ways of Rome, and learn from it not only civil law, but also religious doctrine.

The other influence tending to convert the Arians to orthodoxy was the kingdom of the Franks. Clovis, King of the Franks, had become a Christian, probably in 496. His Christianity was orthodox. Presently his politics became orthodox too. That is to say, he perceived with a statesman's foresight how great a power Rome and its bishop might become, and how decisively they might help his own designs. Clovis's aim was to found a great Frankish kingdom by confederating all the Germanic tribes west of the Rhine, if not east of it. This kingdom would be the predominant power in Western Europe. And who could be of greater assistance in this plan than the bishop of Rome? So Clovis entered into close relations with Rome; he exalted the bishops of his kingdom to be great lords; and he furthered the growing cus-

tom of making great gifts of land to the church. By the end of the seventh century the church owned one-third of the land in Gaul.

This Frankish power, closely allied to Rome, again impressed the Arian Christians in the west. They were isolated and weak in comparison. Why not adopt the creed of these two mighty forces — the Franks and the Papacy — which, it was even then evident, were to have so vast a share in the history of Europe? Thus Arianism in the west disappeared, and orthodox and Roman Christianity replaced it.

3. *Augustine of England.*

Some of the orthodox missionaries who carried on the work of Christianizing the still heathen barbarians are among the most famous men in church history. We must give a few words to two or three of the greatest among them. In 596 Pope Gregory I, given the name of Gregory the Great, sent to England the man who is called the apostle of England, Augustine of Canterbury. There were Christians in Britain long before Augustine, just how long we do not know. It has been said that the apostle Paul may have brought Christianity to the island. There is no evidence for this, but we do know that by the year 314 there were Christian bishops in Britain. The land was, however,

predominantly pagan when Augustine arrived. Such Christianity as he found there was not Roman in certain matters of discipline and ritual. The result was that occasionally disedifying incidents occurred between the British Christians and the new Roman missionaries, when Augustine and his companions tried to induce the stubborn Britains to adopt Roman customs.

Augustine, having been made bishop, did not choose London for his episcopal city, as London was still pagan; but he selected Canterbury in the Kingdom of Kent, as one of his first converts was Ethelbert, the King of Kent. Thus it is that to this day the chief bishop of the English church is the archbishop of the comparatively insignificant town of Canterbury.

4. *Patrick of Ireland.*

Saint Patrick, the apostle of Ireland, was not Irish. Though there is much dispute in fixing his birthplace, we may accept as highly probable the conclusion of one of the latest, and certainly the most learned of his biographers, Professor Bury, that Patrick was born in southwest Britain about the year 389. At the age of seventeen he was captured by Irish pirates on one of their frequent raids on the British coast, and was kept a slave in Ireland for six years. Es-

caping, he made his way to the island of Lerins near the modern Mediterranean resort of Cannes, and spent some time at the famous monastery there. For Patrick while a slave in Ireland had heard the call of the religious and missionary life. To go back to the fierce Irish and to win them to the Christian faith became his dream and his ambition. There were some Christians in Ireland, but not many, and such as there were had been infected with heresy.

The idolatry of the Irish was, we may say, the noblest of idolatries, sun-worship. They had no temples, but open-air altars, and no organized body of priests. The Druids were the class of men most venerated. These were wizards and diviners, men who were believed to have mighty and mysterious powers of raising winds, of bringing sudden darkness, and of making men invisible. The Druids too were the poets of the nation, and the historians who kept in memory the great deeds of old.

Ireland at this time had six kings, of whom the King of Tara was called the high king. Next to the kings came the nobles who owned the land; and then the tenants who tilled the land. Below these were the freemen, a less prosperous body of tenants; then the laborers, who were not freemen, yet belonged to the clan; and lowest of all the slaves who did not belong to the clan,

There is a great missionary advantage in a society so organized. For if the king is once converted, the nobles will follow, and soon the tenants will imitate the nobles, and so on down the scale. With great skill Patrick made his first task in each kingdom the conversion of the king. Rapidly Christianity spread from class to class, until in a remarkably short time Ireland was Christian. Not only was it Christian, but its Christianity was illustrious. Ireland sent out to the continent of Europe almost unceasing streams of missionaries. Irish monks were everywhere in Europe. Irish scholars were at every center of learning. Patrick's work had been well done. The conversion of Ireland was as thorough a Christian enterprise as we can find in history.

Yet Patrick did his work in the face of bitter attacks, the nature of which we do not know. But it is somewhat surprising to hear this splendid missionary say in advanced age that Ireland was not attractive to him, that he felt there as a stranger and an alien, and that, if he followed the wish of his heart, he would go to Britain or Gaul, there to live and die.

5. *Boniface of Germany.*

Saint Boniface, the apostle of Germany, was, like Saint Patrick, not a native of the country

historically associated with his name. Boniface was an Englishman, born about 680, and named originally Winifred. After a visit to the Frisians, Boniface went to Rome in preparation for a missionary career among the Germans. His first work was with the Bavarians and the Thuringians. Then as bishop he took charge of a vast district from Worms to Utrecht and Cologne. He returned for a fruitful period to Bavaria, and, undertaking in 754 or 755 a mission-journey to the Frisians, was murdered by a band of heathen.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CONCLUSION

We have now followed the course of Christian history from the death of Jesus to the writing of the creeds and the establishing of Catholicism. Let us briefly survey this progress of three hundred years and try to learn from it the lesson for our own time and our own faith.

Christianity begins with the simple and sublime teaching and the simple and sublime life of Jesus. The substance of his gospel was that by righteousness, love, and service men enter into the Kingdom of God and commune with God as Father and Friend. We are to know God, to trust Him, to do His will, to be joyous, patient, and faithful in our union with Him, and in this devoted and serene spirit to do good to others with unwearied charity. Wickedness and sin are terrible realities to Jesus, and he is unsparing in severity when he speaks of them. But greater than wickedness and sin is God's forgiving love, which is never withheld from the repentant heart. A Father's home and a

Father's love forever await the contrite prodigal who has turned away from his sin.

This was the chief burden of the preaching of Jesus. In words of grandeur never equaled, but of a simplicity understood by the common people, he bade men love and trust, pray and repent, hope and serve. He brought to us gladness, beauty, a human nature to revere and a God adorable and lovable altogether. He founded no church. He never definitely separated himself from the Jewish church of his fathers. He left on earth a free and simple way of spiritual life, a sacred example, and the memory of a glorious death.

As men then were this simplicity could not live of itself. Men desired then, as so many desire now, an elaborate theology, mysterious sacraments, wonder-working rites, and an authoritative church. The change began with beliefs about Jesus himself. He spoke of himself as God's child and servant called to a special mission, and indeed as the long-promised herald to announce the coming of the divine kingdom. This was not enough for his followers. They made him a celestial being who existed in heaven before his coming on earth. Then they taught that he had appeared among us not to make religion spiritual, simple, and free, but to save a lost race by offering to God's justice the

sacrifice of the cross. In the year three hundred twenty-five they decreed that he was not only of a heavenly nature, but that he was God himself, the second person of a Trinity of which Jesus had never heard.

The next step was taken when the new religion was troubled by differing doctrines. Unity of belief was desired. So the bishops were regarded as divinely commissioned successors of the apostles, and all believers were commanded to follow and obey them. Finally among the bishops themselves, one, the bishop of Rome, was held to be the chief teacher of Christendom with whom all other bishops were to agree in theological teaching. This process ended only in eighteen hundred seventy, when the Pope was declared infallible whenever he teaches the church on a matter of morals or faith.

A similar departure from the simplicity of Jesus we find in other dogmas. Baptism, for example, originally administered in the name of Jesus for the solemn entrance into Christian fellowship, became a kind of magic washing away of sin. Unless even an infant were baptized, it was taught, there could be no admission into heaven. Again, although Jesus had gloriously told us in the parable of the prodigal son how sin is forgiven, the church at last declared that only the muttering of a formula by the absolving

priest could restore the sinner to God's favor. In a score of such ways the dignity and reasonableness of the Gospel became clouded with the dogmas of a great church. Instead of the true heart and devout soul which Jesus asked as the condition of God's favor, men were required to be theologically exact, and to obey without question or examination whatever the church authorities imposed on them.

Yet after all, it is the life and example of Jesus that give vitality even to churches which have thus perverted his Gospel. Beyond all dogmas and all errors, he, the most beautiful of the sons of men, lives through the centuries and inspires sacrifice and devotion in the generations that come and go. For this let us be grateful to the churches whose teachings we cannot accept. They have, amidst much that is false, kept active and powerful the memory of the Master, and to millions of souls they have shown his way of life. The creeds have not conquered Jesus. He is forever conquering the creeds.

In our time the creeds are fast falling. Throughout a long period Unitarian Christians have been blamed and rebuked for refusing to substitute teachings *about* Jesus for the teachings *of* Jesus. Yet every day Christian orthodoxy approaches nearer to the truth for which we

have long borne witness. If we may justly be gratified at this, we must recognize how great a responsibility it puts upon us. We are to prove that a simple faith may yet be sublime. We are to show that without the constraint and terrors of creeds we are one with Jesus in his sincerity, in his religiousness, in his service and his sacrifice. Thus will the ages complete their round; and while we go forward to the new duties of an enlarged world of thought and action, we shall find in the unclouded figure of the Founder of Christianity, just as he was, the chief source of our inspiration and our faith.

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